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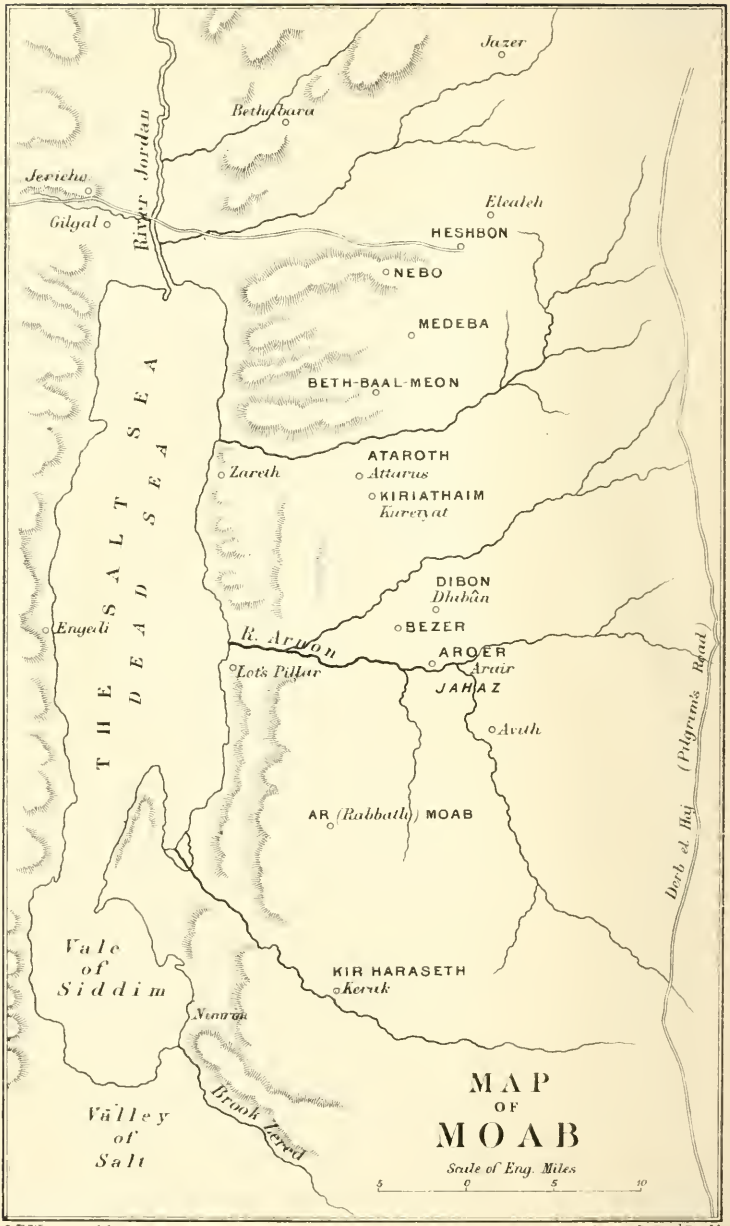
MOAB'S PATRIARCHAL STONE.



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MOAB'S PATRIARCHAL STONE:

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE MOABITE STONE, ITS STORY AND TEACHING.

BY THE REV. JAMES KING, M.A.,
AUTHORIZED LECTURER TO THE PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND.

"Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers."—*Job* viii. 8.

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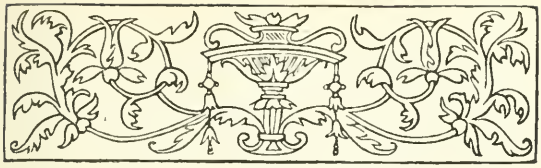

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To James Ridgers, Esq.,

This Book is dedicated by the Author as a

Token of Esteem and

Gratitude.

PREFACE.

THE substance of the following pages has often been presented to the public in the form of lectures on the Moabite Stone, delivered in many towns of England on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund. This little treatise does not lay claim to much originality, inasmuch as the subject matter has been drawn from every available source, but chiefly are we indebted to the learned labours on the subject of Monsieur Clermont Ganneau, Rev. F. A. Klein, Captain Warren, Emanuel Deutsch, George Grove, Esq., Professor Weir, Captain Burton, Professor Wright, Dr. Davidson, Professor G. Rawlinson, author of "The Moabite Stone" in "The Recovery of Jerusalem," Dean Walsh, and Canon Tristram. Neither indeed can it boast of deep scholarship, for although it aims at more than a superficial exposition of the stone, yet the knowledge brought to bear on the subject is the fruit of other men's labours. The transliteration of the primitive alpha-

bet found on the inscription into the square Hebrew characters used at present does not seem necessary in order to understand and appreciate the teaching of this ancient monument. This treatise is not designed for critical scholars, and, therefore, we think it desirable not to introduce the modern square letters, which, strictly speaking, are Chaldaic and not Hebrew, but rather to apply ourselves to the study of the primitive characters found on the stone, characters which furnish an alphabet exactly the same as the old Hebrew, and are, moreover, the original forms of nearly all the alphabets used by modern European nations. We have endeavoured, as far as possible, to harmonize the apparently conflicting accounts connected with the discovery of the monument and the efforts made to secure it, while we leave our readers to judge for themselves respecting the degree of praise or censure to be given to those gentlemen engaged in the matter. An attempt has been made to bring out into bold relief the chief gains to paleography and revealed religion; and by fitting together the pith of what may be called the literature of the Stone, we have endeavoured to present to our readers an unbroken record of this triumphal tablet, its story, and its teaching. Our earnest wish is that the perusal of these pages may tend to strengthen Faith, animate Hope, and increase veneration for the Sacred Volume.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM, 1878.

Chapter I.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE STONE.

IN the summer of 1868 the Rev. F. A. Klein, a native of Prussia, an Anglican clergyman, and for many years the representative of the Church Missionary Society at Jerusalem, made an expedition for his pleasure through some of the districts on the eastern side of the Jordan.

Having passed over the region of Jebel Ajloon (the hilly part of Gilead) and visited es-Salt (Ramoth Gilead), he undertook a journey through the Belka, the district lying between the Jabbok and Arnon.

The greedy, wild character of the inhabitants renders a tour in those parts one attended with considerable danger, and on this account Mr. Klein was accompanied by a native chief called Zattam, who acted in the threefold capacity of guide, protec-

tor, and friend. Zattam was the son of the famous Fendi-l-Fäiz, Sheikh of the powerful tribe of the Beni Sachr, and consequently the party continued their journey without any molestation from the tribes through which they passed. On the 19th August, at a spot about three miles north of the Wadi Mojeb (Arnon), they arrived at the encampment of a tribe called the Beni Hamîdé. The roving Arabs had spread their tents at a place about ten minutes' walk from the ruins of Dhibân,—the ancient Dibon of the Bible; and in a most friendly way received Zattam and his friends. Mr. Klein says—"That carpets and cushions were spread in the tent of the Sheikh, and coffee was prepared with all the ceremonial of Bedouin etiquette. Before the operation of preparing and drinking coffee had been terminated, my friend Zattam, who was always most anxious to make my tour as pleasant and interesting as possible, had informed me that there was among the ruins of Dhibân, scarcely ten minutes from our encampment, a most interesting stone with an ancient inscription on it, which no one had ever been able to decipher, which he would take me to see. As sunset was drawing near I was anxious to be off at once, but Zattam was not to be persuaded to get up from his soft couch and leave off smoking his narghilee, while I was burning with a desire to see the inscription, which the Sheikh of the Beni Hamîdé also described to me as one of the wonders of the

region, which no Frank had yet seen, and which he now had offered to show me as a mark of honour to his friend Zattam, and to me who was travelling under his protection. I, of course, took this for what it was in general meant to be, a Bedouin compliment calculated to bring out a nice bakshish. Still, I afterwards ascertained that his assertion as to no European having, before me, seen the stone was perfectly true; none of the distinguished travellers in those parts had ever seen or heard of it, or they would not have shunned trouble and expense to secure this treasure. I am sorry to find that I was also the last European who had the privilege of seeing this monument of Hebrew antiquity in its perfect state of preservation. When I came to the spot where this precious relic of antiquity was lying on the ground, I was delighted at the sight, and at the same time greatly vexed that I did not come earlier, in order to have an opportunity of copying, at least, a good part of the inscription, which I might then, under the protection of Zattam, have done without the least molestation. I, however, had time enough to examine the stone and its inscription at leisure, and to copy a few words from several lines at random, chiefly with a view on my return to Jerusalem to ascertain the language of the inscription, and prevail on some friends of science to obtain either a complete copy of the inscription, or, better, the monument itself. The stone was lying among the ruins of Dhibân perfectly free and

exposed to view, the inscription uppermost. I got four men to turn it round (it was a basaltic stone exceedingly heavy), in order to ascertain whether there was no inscription on the other side, and found that it was perfectly smooth and without any inscription or other marks.

"What time was left me before sunset I now employed in examining, measuring, and making a correct sketch of the stone, besides endeavouring to collect a perfect alphabet from the inscription.

"What I have I now enclose, and vouch for the perfect correctness of what I give, having taken it down on the spot. The stone is, as appears from the accompanying sketch, rounded on *both* sides, and not only at the upper end as mentioned by Monsieur Ganneau. . . . . In the lower corner sides there are not as many words of the inscription missing as would be the case if it were square at the bottom, as M. Ganneau was wrongly informed by his authority; for, as in the upper part, so also in the lower, in exactly the same way the lines become smaller by degrees. Possibly in the length of the several lines there may be more letters to supply, as now supposed, as in this respect the information received by M. Ganneau is not quite correct. According to my correct measurement on the spot, the stone had—

1 mètre, 13 centimètres in height,
70 centimètres in breadth, and
35 centimètres in thickness,

and, according to my calculation, had thirty-four lines, for the two or three upper lines were very much obliterated. The stone itself was in a *most perfect state of preservation*, not one single piece being broken off, and it was only from great age and exposure to the rain and sun, that certain parts, especially the upper and lower lines, had somewhat suffered.

"Sheikh Zattam has since informed me that he had in his possession a small idol made of brass, with similar characters upon it, which I have, however, lately been informed was sent to Nablous, and sold there. Whether this is true or not, I know not. But most assuredly a scientific expedition to Moab is a great desideratum, and could not but greatly enrich our knowledge of Hebrew archæology."

Mr. Klein was the only European who had the good fortune to gaze upon this ancient stone in its entirety, and on this account it seems desirable to quote his own words. Moreover, as there is great diversity of opinion with regard to the character and purpose of this precious relic, it is well to notice the following particulars :—First, The stone was lying perfectly free and exposed to view, with the inscription uppermost. Secondly, The other side of the stone was perfectly smooth and without any inscription or other marks. Thirdly, It was a basaltic stone, and exceedingly heavy. Fourthly, The stone was rounded on both sides, and not only at the upper end. Fifthly, It was in a most perfect state

of preservation, not one single piece being broken off.

It ought also to be especially noticed that Mr. Klein, on the spot, made a correct sketch of the stone; collected, or tried to collect, a complete alphabet from the inscription; copied a few words from several lines at random; examined the stone and inscription at leisure; and made a correct measurement of the block.

The above letter, dated Jerusalem, March 23, 1870, was addressed to George Grove, Esq., and appeared in the Pall Mall Gazette of April 19th, 1870. The sketch alluded to is in the office of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

With regard to the transactions that occurred in consequence of this wonderful discovery, and the various efforts made to secure this patriarchal stone of the land of Moab, we desire to state that our information is for the most part drawn from the German Official Report, published in the "Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft," vol. xxiv., Leipzig, 1870, and from the letters of Monsieur Clermont Ganneau, official interpreter to the French Consulate at Jerusalem. Some misapprehensions exist with regard to the degree of merit that should be awarded to the French, English, and German agents engaged in this matter; and bitter words have been at times uttered against persons unjustly. Those errors arise from ignorance of the successive steps taken to secure the relic, and on

this account we desire to place before our readers, in chronological order, such transactions as ought to stand forth in bold relief.

It appears then, from the Official Report, that Mr. Klein, after inspecting the stone on the 19th August, 1870, continued his journey round the Dead Sea and arrived at Jerusalem about the end of the same month. The day after his arrival he gave an account of his tour, in the presence of three friends, to Dr. Petermann, Prussian Consul at Jerusalem, calling special attention to the ancient stone lying amid the ruins of Dhibân. According to his statement taken from notes in his diary, it was five spans long, three spans wide, and one and a half spans thick. He showed the sketch and such words of the inscription as he had copied to Dr. Petermann, who took great interest in archæological research, and, moreover, possessed considerable knowledge of palæography. He at once recognized the characters as Phœnician, and being impressed with the importance of the discovery, by the next post, August 29th, he wrote about it to Berlin, and, apprehending danger in delay, requested a telegram in reply, stating, whether the directors of the Royal Museum, Berlin, were inclined to pay 100 napoleons, if necessary, for the purchase of the stone. On receipt of the letter the directors thought it advisable to purchase the monument, and to save time a reply was sent by telegraph. Accordingly, on September 15, that is, seventeen days after the letter was posted, a

telegram from H. Lepsius was received at Jerusalem, authorizing the Consul to expend 100 napoleons in the purchase of it.

Dr. Petermann, thinking that by means of secrecy there was greater chance of securing the prize, and also to prevent collision with other agents, requested Mr. Klein and the three who were present not to mention the matter to anybody. One of the friends, however, confessed that he had already spoken of the relic to Dr. Barclay, senior clergyman of the Jewish Missionary Society. As soon as authority was obtained from Berlin, the Consul held a consultation with Mr. Klein, who through long intercourse with the Arabs had not only acquired a thorough knowledge of their language, but also had great experience of their character, as to the best mode of proceeding in order to obtain the monument. Accordingly Mr. Klein wrote a letter to Fendi-l-Fäiz, Sheikh of the Beni Sachr, a chief whose authority was respected by the Bedouins of Dhibân, requesting his help to obtain the stone, and by this means it was hoped that a purchase might be effected for a small sum of money.

A very clever young Arab named Behnam, assistant to Mr. Klein in the Mission, and well known to the above Sheikh, was immediately despatched from Salt (Ramoth-Gilead), carrying with him the letter and a quantity of felt which had been purchased for packing the stone, and thus

conveying it uninjured to Jerusalem. Some time elapsed before the much longed-for answer arrived, and when the information at last came, as it did in the latter part of the month of September, 1868, it was not of a satisfactory character. The principal Sheikh in question said that before anything could be done in the matter he must first consult with Tarif, Sheikh of the Beni Hamîdé, in whose territory the stone was lying. Shortly afterwards Fendi-l-Fäiz went away to Damascus without holding the promised consultation, and on his return from this journey he informed Messrs. Petermann and Klein, to their deep regret, that he could do nothing in the matter.

It was about this time that Captain Warren, R. E., the active and able agent of the Palestine Exploration Fund at Jerusalem, became acquainted with the existence of this ancient monument ; for although the exact date nowhere appears in the subsequent correspondence on the subject of this wonderful discovery, yet in Captain Warren's first account of the inscription, he states that about six weeks after Mr. Klein saw it on the 19th August, "a man from Kerak (the Kir-hareseth of Scripture, a town in the south of the Land of Moab) came to tell me of a black stone with writing on it, and wanted me to go over and see it." Thus it appears that a native Arab was the first to inform Captain Warren, and that about the end of September. On making further inquiries

Mr. Warren was informed by Mr. Klein that "the Prussian Consul was moving in the matter to get possession of it," and therefore he did not feel justified in taking any further action in the matter at that time.

The writer of the article "The Moabite Stone," in "Our Work in Palestine," speaks thus of Mr. Klein's conduct at this time :—"By a most extraordinary and most unfortunate error of judgment, Mr. Klein communicated his discovery neither to his learned and zealous countryman, M. Clermont Ganneau, nor to his English employers of the mission, nor to Captain Warren, the English explorer; but he went secretly to Dr. Petermann, the Prussian Consul. Here was the grand mistake of the whole business. Either Captain Warren or M. Clermont Ganneau could have got up the stone whole and uninjured for a few napoleons, because the Arabs were wholly unacquainted with its value. Had Mr. Klein gone openly in the first instance to the former, there is not the slightest doubt that this most invaluable monument would be now lying, intact and entire, in the British Museum, in the Louvre, or in Berlin. No matter where, provided only it had been saved."

It is easy of course to suggest what would have been the contingent results had other means been resorted to, but a review of the circumstances as set forth in the Official Report has led us to the conclusion, that at this stage of the proceedings the

Prussian agents ought not to be accused either of apathy or glaring indiscretion. Moreover, eighty pounds does not seem an exorbitant sum to be offered as the price for the delivery of this heavy block at Jerusalem ; and when it is remembered that the sanguine temperament of M. Ganneau led him to offer for the stone four times as much as the Prussians did, we would doubt the expediency of entrusting to that gentleman the means to be employed in securing the stone.

For well-nigh six months, during the winter of 1868-9, this ancient relic lay exposed and neglected amid the ruins of Dhibân. Although the observations of Mr. Klein had excited the curiosity of the natives, yet they had little appreciation of its worth, as appears from the letters of Mr. E. H. Palmer, who visited the Land of Moab in the spring of 1870. In volume 1, page 322, of the Quarterly Statements of the Palestine Exploration Society, Mr. Palmer says :—"We entered Moab by the pass of Jerrah, and were hospitably entertained by Ahmed Ibn Tarif, the Sheikh of the Beni Hamîdé. The object of our coming was immediately divined by the Arabs, for we found that the affair of Dhibân had afflicted them with a positive mania for written stones. . . . . Our host, moreover, added the following re-assuring remark : 'If you Franks had come down here twelve months ago and offered me a pound or two, you might have taken all the stones you chose, the Dhibân one included ;

but now you have taught us the worth of written stones, and the Arabs are awake to their importance at last.'"

In the beginning of March, 1869, Dr. Petermann, acting on the suggestion of Mr. Klein, made a second attempt to secure the stone. Saba Cawâr, an Arab teacher at Jerusalem, well known to the Bedouins, was engaged as a messenger, and forthwith despatched to the land of Moab with authority to deal directly with the Arabs for its purchase. To give Saba Cawâr a personal interest in the matter, Dr. Petermann gave him fifty-three napoleons, three being allowed for the expenses of the journey, and, moreover, promised fifty more napoleons on his return, provided he brought the stone undamaged to Jerusalem, and stated that no questions would be asked as to what was paid for it.

Unfortunately, he also returned without the prize, and informed Dr. Petermann that the Arabs had concealed it. They had, indeed, permitted him to peep at it, but now they asked for it, not 100 napoleons, but 1,000, or 100,000 piastres, a sum equal to about £1,000 sterling. The arrival of two successive messengers at Dhibân no doubt impressed the Arabs with an idea of its value, and the earnest attempt of Saba Cawâr to purchase the stone, increased the cupidity of the greedy sons of the desert. To justify this extravagant demand, the Arabs pretended to believe that if they were deprived of this ancient relic a blight might fall on

their crops, and untold calamities come upon their land. Such a price was, of course, out of the question, and the Prussian Consul at once wrote, on the 19th March, 1869, to Berlin, stating that he saw no way of obtaining the Moabite Stone except through the intervention of the Turkish Government. Nearly three months passed away before an answer was received from Europe. At length, however, a letter arrived in June, containing a despatch from the Grand Vizier, addressed to the Pasha of Jerusalem, asking him "to allow Dr. Petermann to remove the stone at his own expense in case the Pasha had no scruples." Unfortunately, it turned out that the Pasha of Jerusalem had no authority in the countries beyond the Jordan, and, moreover, he had gone to Beyrout to attend a Conference. The letter was despatched to that town to be handed to him by the North German Consulate there; but in the meantime the Pasha returned, and several weeks were thus wasted in waiting for the return of the important despatch. On June 23rd the letter reached the Pasha, who, in reply, stated that as the stone lay in a district under the jurisdiction of his equal, the Pasha of Nablus, he could not do anything direct in the matter, and, moreover, that the Pasha of Nablus could not act unless he first received permission from the Governor-General of Syria. He, however, sent an open letter to Dr. Petermann, addressed to the Wali of Damascus, requesting that official to

order further steps to be taken. This letter, together with the despatch from the Grand Vizier, was at once forwarded to the German Consulate in Beyrout with the urgent request that both might be presented to the Governor-General. From Captain Warren's fuller account of the Moabite Stone, written 11th March, 1870, it appears that after the unsuccessful attempts of Saba Cawâr, Dr. Barclay, senior clergyman of the Jewish Mission, related the circumstances of the case, in the spring of 1869, to M. Clermont Ganneau and Captain Warren. This seems to be the occasion on which M. Ganneau first heard of the existence of the monument. Captain Warren wrote home mentioning the matter to the Secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and also to Mr. Emanuel Deutsch, of the British Museum. He also, with Dr. Barclay, called on Mr. Klein to ask about the stone, but could hear nothing more than was already known, except that measures were still being taken to secure the ancient relic.

Meanwhile, in the beginning of June, 1869, the despatch from the Grand Vizer arrived, and accordingly Captain Warren wrote home by the next mail, saying that the Prussian Consul had obtained a firman for the stone, and that information on the subject must be obtained at Berlin before he could take any action in the matter. Before an answer was received from Damascus, Dr. Petermann set out for Europe, but before leaving Jerusalem he

earnestly requested Dr. Meyer, treasurer to the Prussian Consulate, to do all in his power to secure the stone. This gentleman seems to have made every endeavour to obtain at least a squeeze or rubbing of the inscription, but in every attempt he was baffled. Mr. Klein and Saba Cawâr, from inquiries recently made, declared that the Bedouins had buried the stone and accounted it as the sanctuary of a demon. They would not even allow a squeeze of it to be taken, urging as a plea that such an operation would deprive the stone of its inherent demoniacal power. Thus it will appear that although many attempts had been made to secure it, yet that one year had passed by since its discovery, and little or no progress had been made towards the acquisition of this ancient relic. Towards the end of July, 1869, Captain Warren and the English explorers left Jerusalem, chiefly on the score of ill-health, to spend the summer months in the invigorating air among the hills of the Lebanon, and there they remained for about four months, not returning to Jerusalem until the latter part of November.

In the middle of October, 1869, Saba Cawâr came from the Land of Moab and appeared at the Prussian Consulate, about seven months after his first unsuccessful expedition, with the news that the moment was favourable for purchasing the stone, inasmuch as the chief Sheikh of the Beni Hamîdé had offered to deliver it up for 120 napoleons. Herr Von Alten, the new Consul, successor to Dr.

Petermann, at once advanced 20 napoleons out of his own pocket, in addition to the 100 napoleons granted by the Directors of the Royal Museum, and on giving the 120 napoleons to Saba Cawâr, stipulated with him, that if the stone was delivered at the Consulate before the end of November no account would be required of the expenditure of the money; but if the stone was not delivered within the specified time, then must he return the 120 pieces of gold. Cawâr gladly accepted the conditions, and hastening to Dhibân, "made a contract *d'achat* on the spot in his name, with the Sheikh of the Beni Hamîdé, in which the latter undertook to deliver the stone for the stipulated sum as soon as it was wished."

At this moment everything seemed hopeful, and it appeared as if the much coveted prize was about to be secured. Alas! however, a new difficulty sprang up, on account of the transport of the block to Jerusalem. North of Dhibân lies a district over which jurisdiction is claimed by a tribe called Adwan-Bedouins. Through this district the stone must needs be taken in its transport to Jerusalem; but most unfortunately Kaplan, the Adwân Sheikh, obstinately refused to let it be transported through his territory. It has been suggested that Kaplan's conduct in this transaction was either due to the instigation of some jealous relatives of the Sheikh of the Beni Hamîdé, or that he was acting in the interest of the French, and therefore was trying to frustrate the plans of the Prussian agents.

The real cause of Kaplan's refusal is still a matter of uncertainty, but as a matter of fact, the French Consulate entered the field as competitors for the monument, and M. Clermont Ganneau, official interpreter to the Consulate, manifested great activity in the matter. Cawâr sent word, through Mr. Klein, to Herr Von Alten, that unless the Wali of Damascus exerted his influence the stone could not possibly be obtained. This happened at the beginning of November, at the time of the great visits to Jerusalem, on which occasion the Governor-General of Syria also spends a day there. As Herr Von Alten, after several attempts, could not get to see him, he applied to him in writing with reference to the firman from Constantinople, and received an answer on the same day that he could do nothing for the stone in the interest of the Consulate, since the inspection of it by foreigners yielded an income to the Beni Hamîdé, and that the removal of it, he feared, would cause a fresh revolt. That the Governor-General was entirely mistaken on this point, any one will see who knows that Mr. Klein, of Jerusalem, was the first foreigner who got to know of the existence of this monument, and who reflects how after this time the Bedouins guarded the stone as a sanctuary, in order to keep it from the sight of the Franks, who, besides, most rarely touch that very dangerous territory. Moreover, Saba Cawâr had actually purchased the stone for the Consulate, in a contract voluntarily entered upon

on the part of the Bedouins. On November 13th, Herr Von Alten met the Wali in Jaffa and spoke to him. The issue of the conversation was that the Wali wished to see the contract of purchase which Saba Cawâr made with the Beni Hamidé, and promised to do all in his power. Herr Von Alten forthwith charged Dr. Meyer, the Chancellor, to despatch an especial messenger to Saba Cawâr, who was still on the other side of the Jordan, to bring the contract to Damascus, and then to demand from the Governor-General protection of the stone, as the property of the Consulate, against the difficulties which the hostile Bedouins might place in the way of its transport. This was done at once, and on November 20th, the contract was despatched by means of the Beyrout Consulate to the address of the Governor-General. In the meantime Saba Cawâr returned after the lapse of the thirty days, to await in Jerusalem the expected answer from Damascus, and then with the help of the Pasha of Nablus, to transport the stone to Damascus.

About this time Monsieur Clermont Ganneau, official interpreter to the French Consulate at Jerusalem, enters upon the scene as a competitor for the acquisition of the monument. He had known of its existence for six months, because Dr. Barclay, in a conversation with Captain Warren and M. Ganneau in the spring of 1869, had spoken not only of its discovery, but also of the efforts that

were being made to secure it. M. Ganneau had, moreover, obtained information from the natives and Bedouins, and from an Arab belonging to the district he had actually obtained a copy roughly made of several lines of the inscription. Being an enthusiast in oriental literature and surmising from the first the great importance of the ancient relic, he determined at any price to obtain at least a squeeze or rubbing of the inscription. Accordingly he engaged an intelligent young Arab named Yâqoub Caravacca, who was despatched to Dhibân, accompanied by two horsemen. With difficulty authority was obtained to make an impression, and while the squeeze was being completed a scene ensued beyond measure exciting.

While Caravacca was pressing the damp paper against the stone the jabbering Arabs stood round, one party from the mountains, the other from the plains, each asserting its own interest in the monument and anxious to turn that interest to the best possible account. The excitement and gesticulation became so frantic that it became plain that neither the stone nor the squeeze would easily pass into the hands of the Europeans.

From fierce and exasperating words, the Arabs soon came to fiercer and more angry blows; Caravacca, the unfortunate messenger, was jostled and abused, and in the squabble that ensued his leg was pierced by the thrust of a lance. One of the horsemen, named Djemil, had the presence of

mind to seize the squeeze paper, still damp, and tore it from the stone in seven fragments, then suddenly springing upon his steed he narrowly escaped a graver fate, and galloping off at full speed soon overtook his companions. In the meantime M. Ganneau made the acquaintance of a Sheikh of the Beni Sakher, by name 'Id el Faëz, who had seen the stone, and undertook to bargain with the Beni Hamîdé for the purchase of it. They asked for it 400 medjidies, a sum according to Dr. Ginsburg equal to £375, although of considerably less value according to Captain Burton. Sheikh 'Id repaired to Jerusalem and related to M. Ganneau the conditions of purchase, and the young Frenchman, burning with a desire to get possession of the precious relic, gave him 200 medjidies in advance and forthwith despatched the Sheikh to purchase the stone. While this transaction was being negotiated, an order from the Wali of Damascus was addressed to M. Said, Pasha of Nablus, authorizing him to demand the stone of Dhibân from the natives. Dr. Meyer moreover says, "that the Pasha of Nablus had engaged to deliver the stone into the hands of the Consul for 100 napoleons, a sum equal to £80."

According to the official report :—"The Pasha of Nablus, directed by a firman obtained by us from the Wali of Damascus, engaged to place the stone in our hands in December for 100 gold napoleons and summoned the Beni Hamîdé tribe to give up the stone."

In consequence of this agreement the Pasha of Nablus took immediate action in the matter and through his subordinate, the Modir of Salt, put pressure upon the natives and demanded the stone. The tribes beyond the Jordan during the previous summer had been in conflict with the Wali of Damascus, and being worsted they burned with indignation and hatred and in an evil hour they determined that sooner than give up the stone to the Turkish authorities they would smash it to pieces.

The Beni Hamîdé, or, as Captain Burton calls them, the Benu Humaydah, appear to be the veritable descendants of the ancient Moabites. They are the most savage and intractable tribe of the Belka, and roam freely over this fine region without having any settled home. This tribe had just suffered from the Belka expedition, led in person by Rashid Pasha, then Wali or Governor-General of Syria, and perfectly knowing what a dragonnade meant, on the stone being demanded they were in paroxysms of terror at the idea of another raid. Then came the sad catastrophe. The wild Beni Hamîdé knowing that the demand to give up the stone to the German Consulate had been ordered by the Turkish Government, and finding that the Modir (sous préfet) of Salt was about to put pressure upon them, in agonies of fear made a bonfire round and below the precious relic, threw cold water upon it and broke it to pieces

with boulders. According to Captain Warren the bits were distributed among the different families to place in the granaries and act as blessings upon the corn, for they said that without the stone or its equivalent in money that a blight would fall upon their crops.

Thus did the wild sons of the desert bring about the lamentable destruction of the celebrated monument of Mesha, and by ruthlessly smashing the stone into fifty fragments, it appeared for a time as if this peerless triumphal pillar of the land of Moab was for ever irretrievably lost to the world.

The melancholy tidings of the lamentable destruction were first made known at Jerusalem by Sheikh 'Id, who after two weeks' absence returned with the money, and told M. Ganneau that while he was in Jerusalem the natives had broken the stone to pieces. The latter could not believe that this act of savage barbarism had occurred, until it was confirmed on the arrival from Moab of Saba Cawâr.

Captain Warren and party returned from the Lebanon in November, 1869, and as they were journeying towards Jerusalem, on the road half-way up from Jaffa, they were met by an Adwân named Goblan, who said to Captain Warren that he had come to welcome him back. The latter, however, suspecting that the Bedouin had not undertaken an arduous journey from the other side of the Jordan merely for that purpose, but that he had some important news to reveal, walked on with Goblan alone,

in front of the party. The Adwân after several preliminaries told him that there had been an inscribed stone across the Jordan which the natives had broken sooner than let some Franks have it, and as a proof of his story he showed a piece of the stone with some letters on it, which he presented to Captain Warren. A squeeze of this fragment was forwarded on the 22nd December, 1869, to the Palestine Exploration Office.

The day after Goblan said, that M. Ganneau had before its destruction sent down to get a squeeze but had failed, and that there had been a fight over it; he also said that the Governor of Nablus, through the Modîr of es-Salt, had put pressure upon the Bedouins to obtain the stone, and that they sooner than give it up had put fire under it and thrown water on it, and had so broken it up;—"but," added he, "there are still some pieces left." Captain Warren, on seeing that there was a chance of the inscription being lost to the world, gave Goblan squeeze paper to apply to the broken fragments or to the whole stone, if perchance it still remained unbroken, and sent him off with all possible speed.

In a few days he returned with a squeeze of a Nabatean inscription obtained from Umm-ar Russas, a place about eight miles E. N. E. of Dhibân, pretending at first that it was an impression of the stone. Seeing that Captain Warren could not thus be deceived, he confessed where he had obtained the squeeze, and added that the real stone was broken

in pieces. Again, however, Goblan was sent to get, if possible, impressions of any fragments he could see.

In the meantime M. Ganneau came to tell of, and to show Captain Warren, the imperfect squeeze torn in seven pieces, as brought to him by Sheikh Djemîl. In return Captain Warren showed to M. Ganneau and the Count de Vogüe, then in Jerusalem, the broken piece with characters in his possession, which was then the only fragment brought up to Jerusalem.

On the 13th January, 1870, Goblan returned, bringing with him two excellent squeezes of two large fragments of the stone, which most fortunately had been preserved. The two fragments together were equal to about half the stone ; the larger contained 358 letters and the other 150, making a total of 508 letters. Goblan brought also twelve small pieces of the stone with a letter or two on each.

By a curious coincidence Djemîl, a Bedouin whom M. Ganneau had also sent in search of the fragments, returned to Jerusalem on the same day, namely the 13th January, 1870, and brought with him squeezes tolerably well done of the same two fragments, and, as appears from the account, brought also with him some little morsels of the stone. Captain Warren offered the use of his two excellent impressions to M. Ganneau, who consequently made use of them in correcting his own, and in return gave to Captain Warren a translation of the fragments. This translation, together with copies of the squeezes, was forwarded

on 22nd January, 1870, to the Palestine Exploration Office. Goblan was again sent down to purchase the smaller, inasmuch as Ganneau seemed more interested in the larger. The greedy natives, however, put up the pieces for sale by auction, while Goblan and Djemîl bade against each other. The smaller fragment was first purchased by Djemîl who had taken money down with him; but Goblan appeared at Jerusalem and said that with a larger sum of money he might even yet purchase the fragment. Captain Warren communicated this information to Ganneau, to put the latter on his guard, and despatched Goblan to purchase the larger of the two fragments. Again the two natives bade against each other, and although it was not purchased when Captain Warren wrote his second and fuller account of the stone, dated 11th March, 1870, yet the larger fragment also was eventually acquired by M. Clermont Ganneau. It ought here to be mentioned that Captain Warren on getting the first squeeze of the stone called on Herr Von Alten, the Prussian Consul, and mentioned the circumstance to him, and also wrote to inform Dr. Petermann then at Berlin. With the elements in his possession, M. Ganneau at once, on the 13th January, 1870, the day when Djemîl brought the first squeezes, set to work to make a restoration of the inscription, and not only showed enthusiastic activity but exhibited consummate ability, and executed his task in a most scholarly,

careful, and conscientious manner. In the incredibly short period of four days, he not only made a restoration of the inscription, but he also made a transcript of the text in Hebrew, and a translation in French.

On the 16th January, 1870, this restoration, transcript, and translation, accompanied by a memoir relating the history of the stone, was forwarded to Comte de Vogüe at Paris to be presented without delay to L'Académie.

Since this memoir is the only source from which we learn the interesting details of the steps taken for the recovery of the inscription by this young French *savant*, we think it desirable to furnish our readers with the following translation of the memoir itself :—

"For a long time I knew from the reports of natives and Bedouins that there existed at Dhibân, —the ancient Dibon,—on the other side of the Dead Sea, a great block of black stone covered with characters. I surmised at first the importance of this monument, but I did not dream of going to Dhibân to assure myself of the correctness of the accounts which I had received ; a journey beyond the Jordan is a difficult undertaking and, moreover, a very expensive matter. However, the information subsequently collected gave me the assurance that the black stone was a pillar, and that the characters engraved were Phœnician. I received, moreover, from an Arab of the town, in

a journey in these parts, a copy very roughly done of several lines of the inscription. There was no more possible doubt ; I determined at once to procure at any price an impression of a monument so precious. I sent to Dhibân with two horsemen of the tribe belonging to Sheikh Zablan, a young Arab of great intelligence, by name Yâqoub Caravacca. They obtained, not without difficulty, from the Beni Hamîdé or Hamaïdé, proprietors of the stone, the authority to take an impression. During the operation, one of those quarrels so frequent among the Bedouins arose between the Beni Hamîdé present, a scuffle ensued, and my men had only time to regain their horses. Poor Yâqoub had, moreover, in the squabble his leg pierced by the thrust of a lance. The impression would have been destroyed but for the presence of mind of one of the companions of Yâqoub's journey, named Sheikh Djemil, who in the midst of the uproar threw himself into the hole, at the bottom of which was the stone, snatched the paper still wet which covered it, and thrust the fragments into the pocket of his robe, jumped upon his horse, and at full gallop rode off to rejoin his two companions.

" The aim of the expedition was then attained ; I had an impression, but in what a state, alas ! The fragments, quite damp, were torn and crumpled in drying, and traces of the characters were

almost imperceptible. One could not distinguish them but by their transparency, whilst interposing the sheet between the eye and a candle or a ray of the sun. I read enough of it, however, to convince me of the great importance of this discovery. In the meantime I had an opportunity of making acquaintance with a Sheikh of the Beni Sakher, a neighbouring tribe of the Beni Hamîdé. Sheikh 'Id el Faëz had seen the stone. He tried hard to compensate the Beni Hamîdé and to bring it to me at Jerusalem. He asked four hundred medjidies, one half of which I gave to him in advance. This was a great sum, and I ran great risk of not seeing again either stone or money or Bedouin.

"At the end of two weeks Sheikh 'Id loyally brought back to me the money, telling me that while he was in treaty with me at Jerusalem the natives had broken the inscription in pieces. He gave as a reason for this act of incomprehensible barbarism, a demand which had been addressed to them on the subject of the monument by the Turkish authority, from whom they wished to take away the pretext of interference in their affairs. I did not believe one word of all this story, in spite of the positive assurances of Sheikh 'Id. His account, however, was but too true, as I have just acquired the proof of it only a few days ago. After this defeat I relinquished for a time the pillar of Dhibân, and I devoted myself to studying

the impression in fragments, which I had in my possession. Last week I suddenly witnessed the arrival of Sheikh Djemîl whom I had sent later to the discovery, armed with a brush and paper for an impression. He brought me back two impressions, pretty skilfully taken moreover, of the two large fragments of the stone, besides some little pieces of the stone itself with characters. It was very necessary for me that I should repair to evidence. Moreover, the documents perfectly harmonized with those belonging to Captain Warren, who was conversant with my course of action and who on his part had sent off another Bedouin. His man brought back to him likewise an impression of the two same fragments, and some small pieces with characters. Having ascertained the certainty of the destruction of the monument, I at once set myself to attempt a restoration with the elements which I possessed : my first impression, which gave me pretty nearly the whole (stone), with the gaps unfortunately considerable ; my partial impressions of the two large fragments ; the copy, illegible in itself, of some lines, and the small pieces.

"It is the result of this first work which I to-day ask you to submit to the Academy. This result, obtained in a few days only, leaves certainly much to be desired. It is yet far from perfect, but I hope, with study further pursued, to be permitted to attain to a perfect knowledge of it. But I hasten to deliver it, such as it is, to the public, not wishing

to keep back the knowledge of a monument so precious to science.

"From the details which have been given by different persons, the stone was a bulky, massive block, measuring five spans in length, by three in width, and about the same in thickness. From the impressions it would be one yard in height and 60 centimetres in width, with an equal thickness.

"The stone with respect to appearance, as I have been assured by the pieces that have been brought to me, is a kind of basalt of a bluish-black, streaked with brilliant spangles in the inside, and covered with a rough brown patina on the parts of the surface engraved. The compact density of the stone gave to the monument an enormous weight, and would have rendered the transport very difficult. The form of the stone was that of an oblong, terminated on the top by a rounded part; the lower angle on the right had already been broken off for a very long time. I have counted thirty-four lines in the impression with which I have been furnished. The lines on the top are much shorter than the others, the stone diminishing in size towards the upper part. The average number of letters per line is from thirty-three to thirty-five. The length of the right side possesses a kind of little border forming a framework and is prolonged nearly to the bottom. It had disappeared on the left side. The characters are small compared with the surface they cover; they

are not deeply engraved on account of the extreme hardness of the stone. Many of those between must be but little legible on the stone itself, for each time that I wished to refer to the partial copy for a letter doubtful in my impression, the letter had been skipped over by the copyist. A remark of the highest interest is that all the words are separated by dots, and that the text is divided into verses by vertical lines, which are of special aid in the deciphering and interpretation. The subjoined sketch, which gives the letters in their natural size, is a restoration, obtained by the union and superposition of the impression in shreds, and the two partial impressions. The blue line indicates the parts torn in the first, the dotted line the limits of the other two. The harmony of the lines, determined with great trouble and verified by many attempts, may be considered as certain. This drawing is accompanied by several impressions of small pieces with characters which I possess.

"It remains with me now to justify this attempt at translation, and quickly to furnish the new facts given to science by the pillar of Dhibân."

With respect to Ganneau's memoir a few particulars ought to be noted :—

1. No mention is made of the original discovery of the stone by Mr. Klein, and not a word is said regarding the efforts made by the Prussian Consulate. This is much to be regretted, inasmuch as

this scholarly young French *savant* knew well the circumstances of the case, and the fact that he is silent on these points will ever render him amenable to the imputation cast upon him, namely, that he was more jealous to appear as the original discoverer of the monument, than to give credit to whom credit is due.

2. Many of the details of Caravacca's efforts to obtain a squeeze have been ridiculed, and the exciting scene where Djemîl, in order to secure the squeeze, throws himself into the hole has been treated by Professor Davidson as the coinage of M. Ganneau's imagination. Mr. Klein, the original discoverer, says, "That the stone was lying among the ruins of Dibon perfectly free and exposed to view, the inscription uppermost. I got four men to turn it over." The Professor, under the impression that this statement contradicts M. Ganneau's description, remarks: "Thus M. Ganneau's splendid tableau of the Sheikh throwing himself into the hole where the stone was lying, grasping the wet paper, and thrusting it torn and crumbled into his robe, jumping on his horse and galloping off *ventre à terre* to join his two companions, is worthy of a place beside the other historical paintings of his country on the walls of the Louvre." Notwithstanding this remark, it seems to us that the two accounts may be substantially correct, and harmonize perfectly with each other. The stone when *first* seen was lying free and exposed to view, but it appears

evident that it was not permitted to retain for any length of time its original position, for Saba Cawâr as early as March, 1869, that is, six months after the discovery, informed the Prussian Consul that the Bedouins had concealed the stone. Again, Mr. Klein himself, a short time before M. Ganneau made an effort to obtain a squeeze, declared that the Bedouins, according to the most recent inquiries, *had buried the stone* and considered it as the sanctuary of a demon. Dr. Tristram also in the "Land of Moab" says: "We went to see the spot where the Moabite stone or monolith of King Mesha was found. Very near this spot it was afterwards *buried*, when the dispute about its proprietorship arose among the Hamîdé, and it was then, as is too well known, broken by one party of the rival claimants."

3. According to the Memoir the stone was a bulky, massive block, oblong in shape, rounded at the top, and square at the bottom. The inferior angle on the right had been broken off for a long time, and the dimensions were five spans in length, by three in width, and about the same in thickness, while judging from the impressions it would be one metre in height, sixty centimetres in width, with an equal thickness. Dr. Tristram reminds us that although the stone has been spoken of as a huge block of basalt, yet at most it only measured three and a half feet by two feet. The description of Mr. Klein, the only European who saw it before it was broken,

as given in his well-known letter, dated 23rd March, 1870, runs thus: "The stone is, as appears from the accompanying sketch, rounded on both sides, not only at the upper end, as mentioned by Monsieur Ganneau." "It is strange," remarks Dr. Ginsburg, "that Professor Rawlinson, who published an article on the Moabite Stone in the 'Contemporary Review' of August, 1870, more than three months after the appearance of Mr. Klein's letter in the 'Pall Mall Gazette,' and more than a month after it was republished in the 'Palestine Exploration Society's Quarterly Statement,' still represents the stone as square at the bottom." It will be noticed that Mr. Klein gives the thickness as equal to half the width, while M. Ganneau makes the thickness and width of the stone equal. The exact shape of the monument is of great importance, for the statement of M. Ganneau, were it true, that it was square at the bottom, would afford a strong presumption that the stone originally stood erect as a single column or pillar; while the fact that it is rounded at both ends, seems to indicate that it was only an inscribed tablet attached to some grander monument.

4. The Memoir also furnishes us with the elements in the possession of M. Ganneau, by means of which he skilfully effected a restoration of the inscription. These elements were four in number, and consisted of an impression of the whole stone in seven torn fragments, with many considerable gaps; impressions of the two large fragments as

brought by Djemîl on 13th January, 1870, and corrected by two impressions of the same fragments brought by Goblân to Captain Warren on the same day; a rough copy of some lines of the inscription brought to M. Ganneau by an Arab; twelve small morsels of the stone itself. Dr. Ginsburg thinks that another element, by means of which M. Ganneau made his first restoration, was Captain Warren's second squeeze of the larger fragment B.; but in this matter the Doctor seems to forget that M. Ganneau's restoration was accomplished on the 16th of January, 1870, while the squeeze alluded to could not be in Captain Warren's possession for some time after that date. Captain Warren, in his fuller account, dated 11th March, 1870, says: "My Bedouin at this time brought me a very excellent squeeze of the larger fragment, which I showed to M. Ganneau, and sent a copy home 4th February, 1870."

5. According to the Memoir the inscription consisted of thirty-four lines with an average number of letters from thirty-three to thirty-five per line, making a grand total of from 1122 to 1190 letters on the monument. This harmonizes substantially with Dr. Ginsburg's latest calculation, who fixes 1119 as the probable total number of letters on the stone.

Whatever shortcomings may exist in the Memoir itself, and however much men may disagree with regard to the accuracy of details, yet in respect to the consummate manner in which M. Ganneau

effected a restoration, transcript, and translation in the incredibly short period of four days, there exists but one opinion among the learned.

Dr. Ginsburg testifies: "An examination, however, of M. Ganneau's and Captain Warren's texts of the two larger fragments will show that in spite of the variations in these transcripts the young French *savant* has performed his task in a most scholarly, careful, and conscientious manner, and that his text can be relied upon; whilst Captain Warren, though equally indefatigable and scrupulous, did not bring to his transcript that knowledge of the language which is absolutely essential to the deciphering of such a monument, and hence copied his squeezes in a purely mechanical manner. The simple exhibition of these variations will convince any impartial reader of the high value of M. Ganneau's labours. Indeed, since he published the first transcript of the mutilated text, this enthusiastic scholar has incessantly prosecuted his studies of the sundry materials in his possession, and as the result of this research, issued two revised texts with elaborate notes."

Professor Davidson says:—"It is but fair to Ganneau to acknowledge that he showed a very great enthusiasm in regard to the monument, the extraordinary value of which he fully appreciated, and was prepared to expend a very large sum of money to procure it. He as well as Captain Warren used every effort to procure squeezes of the

fragments and, if possible, bits of the stone itself, and has worked unweariedly at the restoration of the inscription of which he has published no less than three recensions. *No man deserves so highly of Oriental scholarship as he does* in connection with the discovery."

Dr. Wright, late of the British Museum and Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, in an article on "The Moabite Inscription," published in the "North British Review" for October, 1870, writes :—"From these data the inscription had to be reconstructed ; and M. Ganneau deserves high praise for the patience and ingenuity which he has shown in trying to perform this very difficult task. It will be almost impossible to arrive at a perfectly satisfactory conclusion until the whole of the remaining fragments have been collected at one place, and submitted by photographs or otherwise to the examination of several competent persons." But nevertheless M. Ganneau has been harshly dealt with by certain scholars in England ; and it is scarcely possible with Mr. Deutsch to "reject the bulk of M. Ganneau's restoration, transcript, interpretation, and all." (Letter to the Editor of the "Times," March 23, 1870.)

Professor Schlottman's estimate comes much nearer the truth, in considering M. Ganneau's revised text as the result of an objective procedure, skilful, able, careful, and conscientious.

Mr. Klein (March 23, 1870) cannot too highly

praise the zeal, energy, and tact of M. Ganneau; while Professor Duncan H. Weir of Glasgow in the October number of "Good Words" for 1870, accepts M. Ganneau's restoration as on the whole correct.

The course of action taken by M. Ganneau has been the subject of much controversy and bitter strife. The Prussian Official Report says:—"As to the share of M. Ganneau, after obtaining also from Salt further information about the existence of the stone, he first sent an Arab to the Beni Hamîdé. . . . It is evident from the above official report that the German clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Klein, discovered the stone, and communicated with the German Consulate in order to secure it, that a contract was made by the Consulate with the proprietors of it, and that the delivery of the stone to the Consulate was ordered by the Turkish government. According to the common rules of discretion, it would be expected that no one would interfere with the progress of this affair before it was announced that the negotiations were either concluded or broken off." In connection with this censure, it is well to remember that the Prussian Consulate had been making efforts to secure the monument for about fifteen months, that in consequence of the breaking of the stone their labours were spent in vain, and that consequently when alluding to the intervention of M. Ganneau the censure was probably written under a feeling of disappointment. Dr. Ginsburg, however, speaks

with greater severity, and not only condemns M. Ganneau for his "unwise measures," as well as for his "hasty and precipitate action," but commenting upon the official censure says :—"From the foregoing report it will be seen that Mr. Klein communicated his discovery of the stone to Dr. Petermann in August, 1868 ; that negotiations to obtain this monument for the Berlin Museum were at once set on foot ; that the negotiations were anxiously and uninterruptedly carried on till the ancient relic was broken in pieces in November, 1869 ; and that immediately after these negotiations were entered upon, both its discovery and the Prussian Consulate's endeavours to secure it were perfectly well known in Jerusalem, as the whole affair was no longer a secret. Now it was only in October, 1869, that M. Ganneau obtained independent information and the rough copy of a few signs of the stone, hence fourteen months after its discovery by Mr. Klein. Moreover, M. Ganneau's endeavours to secure the stone for himself were indisputably made at the very time when it was perfectly well known that the German Consulate's negotiations were being carried on, thus bringing into collision two opposite bidders and thereby imperilling the monument itself. With these facts before us we must confess that the official report treats M. Ganneau very courteously."

On the other hand there are many who justify M. Ganneau, thinking that his course of action was

perfectly legitimate. Foremost among these is Captain Richard F. Burton, who in his "Unexplored Syria," vol. 2, says :—"We read with some surprise 'the ordinary rules of discretion would seem to have demanded that nobody should have interfered with the transaction until it had been regularly brought to a conclusion or broken off.' It will be seen that the rules of discretion were repeatedly violated by those who advance the charge, and that the transaction having been avowedly broken off had come to a conclusion. M. Ganneau was notably the first to recognize the immense importance of the monument. . . . . About that time Dr. Petermann left Jerusalem, *after personally assuring M. Ganneau that the whole affair had fallen through.* In Dr. Petermann's own published statement we read, 'It was only after my departure, when they probably thought that our Consulate would manifest no further interest in it, that M. Ganneau, of the French Consulate, got to know of the stone.' These words make it abundantly evident that 'the ordinary rules of discretion' should not have been invoked in an extraordinary case, and that the field had been left clear for M. Ganneau." If the sentence in italics can be substantiated, then it is hard to see how any blame whatever can be attached to the course taken by M. Ganneau, and this view of the matter is evidently endorsed by the author of "The Moabite Stone," in "Our Work in Palestine."

Captain Warren, in a letter dated March 11th, 1870, speaking of M. Ganneau, says: "I consider that our success in getting up the squeezes and parts of the stone without hindrance from each other is due to the *entente cordiale* which existed between us; for if any jealousy had existed we might neither of us have done anything, and the inscription would have still been lost to the world; and I now with pleasure record my acknowledgment of M. Ganneau's honourable and upright conduct in this delicate matter so far as I have been concerned in it."

Moreover, the Rev. F. A. Klein, the original discoverer of the stone, in his well-known letter published in the "Pall Mall Gazette" of April 19th, 1870, writes: "The matter of the stone being thus necessarily entrusted to the hands of natives, of course then ceased to be a secret, and other parties also heard of it, and exerted themselves with laudable zeal and energy to obtain, if not the stone itself, at least a copy of it; and one cannot too highly praise the zeal, energy, and tact of M. Ganneau and Captain Warren, who have through their exertions preserved to the learned world parts, at least, of this most valuable monument of Hebrew antiquity, and who I sincerely trust will ultimately succeed in obtaining and deciphering the whole inscription."

Chapter II.

THE LAND OF MOAB.

IN order that our readers may better appreciate the invaluable inscription on the Moabite Stone, we think it desirable to sketch briefly the more striking features in the history of the Land of Moab. Moab was the elder son of Lot, and the name literally signifies "seed of the father," or, according to some philologists, "the desirable land," a term fitly applied to the district, from the great fertility of the soil. Lot's younger son was called Ben-Ammi, and while the Moabites were the descendants of Moab, the Ammonites were the descendants of Ben-Ammi. Thus we see that these tribes were related to each other, being descended from two brothers.

When the flocks and herds belonging to Abraham and Lot became so numerous that the hill country of Judea was not large enough to supply

them with sufficient pasture, "and there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle," then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? if thou wilt take the right hand then I will go to the left, or if thou wilt take the left then I will go to the right. And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of the Jordan that it was well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan and pitched his tent toward Sodom." Thus is the district, afterwards called Moab, introduced to our notice as a rich pastoral country furnishing pasturage for flocks and herds.

After the destruction of the cities of the plain Lot lived at Zoar, and from the neighbourhood of Zoar the descendants of the patriarch gradually extended themselves until they covered the whole region extending from the River Jabbok on the north to the Brook of the Willows on the south; and from the River Jordan and Dead Sea westward to the mountains of Gilead and the sandy plains of Arabia. This region had previously been inhabited by a giant race named Emims, described in the Bible as a people, "great, many, and tall," and probably akin to the Anakims, the giant race of Hebron. The Moabites expelled the

Emims, built cities, and made considerable progress in civilization. The Ammonites extended themselves to the more distant north-east country, and took possession of the pastures and waste lands outside the mountainous district. From the various allusions to them in the Bible, they seem to have continued a roving, uncivilized people, having no settled homes and living for the most part amid the pastoral lands of Gilead.

The Moabites possessed the rich highlands which crown the eastern chasm of the Dead Sea, and the rolling country extending northwards as far as the foot of the hills of Gilead, together with the lowlands between their own hills and the River Jordan, a region about fifty miles in length by ten or twelve in breadth.

The Moabites, however, were not long left in quiet possession of their territory, for an ancient people called the Amorites, living in the hill country of Judea, left their district to extend their conquests in other parts. The word Amorites means mountaineers, and living as they did in the hilly districts they were a bold, warlike people. Passing north they crossed the Jordan, and, led on by Sihon their king, those hardy mountaineers fought against the Moabites, and having dispossessed them of two-thirds of their country, drove them across the tremendous chasm of the River Arnon. Sihon their king established his seat of empire in Heshbon, and a song of triumph

was composed commemorating their victory over the Moabites. This ballad or national song is recorded in Numbers xxi. 27-30. "Come unto Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared: for there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab, and the lords of the high places of Arnon. Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh: he hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites. We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba." Shortly after the conquest achieved by the Amorites, and 500 years after the destruction of Sodom, the Israelites after wandering for forty years in the wilderness approached the borders of Moab on their way to the Promised Land. The tribes indeed were warned in their journey towards Canaan not to interfere with the Moabites or appropriate any part of their territory, and accordingly they marched round through the country lying eastward. Balak, the king of Moab, at this period either did not understand or did not trust this peaceful purpose; and it is no wonder that, after such losses inflicted upon them by the Amorites, the Moabites dreaded the approach of the Israelites, lest further calamities should desolate their nation.

Their country was now confined to the southern part of the table land on the east of the Dead Sea, and south of the ravine of the Arnon, a district which, although small, was compact and readily defensible. There were but two or three steep passes through the cliffs which overhung the sea ; and the hills which swept round on the south and east were not easily penetrated. It was well watered with valleys and wide plains among its hills. It was a fruitful land, and its grassy downs afforded pasture for numerous flocks and herds.

Balak, the son of Zippor, king of the Moabites, seeing the hosts of Israel encamped in the plains surrounding the highlands of Moab, and knowing that the Israelites had completely routed the Amorites and taken possession of their territory, was in great dread, both Balak and his people. "And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many." So Balak went to the elders of Midian and addressing them in language highly appropriate to a pastoral people said :—"Now shall this company lick up all that is round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." Accordingly he sent messengers to Balaam, the son of Beor, who belonged to Pethor by the river of his people, and this soothsayer having been brought from the mountains of the east, even from Aram which is Mesopotamia, he was urged by Balak to curse the people of God. We know well what followed. Balaam standing

on the summit of the mountains and seeing the Israelites encamped far and wide on the plains beneath, felt that he could not curse those chosen and beloved by the Most High; and while thus meditating on the blessedness of all who trust in the Lord, the soothsayer gave utterance to that prayer which may be regarded as the prayer of the heart of humanity. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

With reference also to the Messianic King and the spiritual conquests of the Day-spring from on High, is uttered the well-known prophecy: "I shall see Him but not near, I shall behold Him but not nigh, there shall come a Star out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, that shall smite the corners of Moab and destroy all the children of Sheth." Balak, hearing that the people were blessed instead of cursed, was in dreadful extremity, and suffered the same dreadful agony that Mesha afterwards did, when on the walls of Kirharaseth he offered up his eldest son for a burnt offering. According to Father Jerome and Bishop Butler, Balak proposed the same awful sacrifice, a course of action which seems to have been resorted to in case of dire extremity by the kings of Moab. According to these divines the horrid resolution of Balak is alluded to by the prophet Micah: "O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam, son of Beor, answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know

the righteousness of the Lord. Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Balak in his extremity and anguish proposed to Balaam this way of escape from Divine anger, and was only restrained from this awful sacrifice by the wise counsel of Balaam. Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land, but from a Moabite sanctuary, even from the summit of Nebo, the Israelitish leader, looking across the swellings of Jordan, gazed upon the land promised to the Seed of Abraham.

> "Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
> Stand drest in living green,
> So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
> While Jordan rolled between.
> Could we but stand where Moses stood,
> And view the landscape o'er,
> Not Jordan's stream nor death's cold flood
> Should fright us from the shore."

There Moses died and no one knoweth of his grave, save that he lies in a valley over again Beth-peor, and thus do his mortal remains rest in peace by the sanctuary of a false God, whom in life he so strongly condemned.

With respect to the future history of this country, we notice that a hostile feeling existed for the most part between the Moabites and Israelites. In the times of the Judges, when the children of Israel fell into sin, God strengthened the hands of Eglon, king of Moab, and to this prince the Israelites were in subjection for the long space of eighteen years. Amid the jealousy and hostility of the two nations, a pleasing event occurred also in the period of the Judges. "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband. Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth

out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept."

Naomi then urged them to return to their home and their country; but when Orpah had gone back to her people, Ruth lingered behind, and when urged by Naomi to return to her home, in most earnest and affecting words, she said:—"Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem."

Ruth the Moabitess therefore lived in the land of Judah, and subsequently married Boaz of Beth-lehem-judah, the great grandfather of David, so that the Psalmist himself, the poet-king of Israel, had Moabite blood in his veins. Thus also was Ruth the Moabitess introduced into that royal line from which sprang Great David's Greater Son, who was Himself of the house and lineage of David. When David was persecuted by Saul, and

hunted after from place to place, he on one occasion passed over to the country of Moab, and entrusted the care of his father and mother to the king of the Moabites. Whether the king of Moab was unfaithful to the trust reposed in him is uncertain, but David, when established on the throne of Zion, for some reason not explained, made war against the Moabites, and not only reduced them to subjection but treated them with apparent severity.

Thus Moab was by David reduced to be a tributary state of the kingdom of Israel, and a long period elapsed before the Moabites recovered from the severity of this blow. They remained quiet during the reign of David, and shared in the universal peace of the reign of Solomon. Among Solomon's wives were Moabitish women, who corrupted the mind of this monarch so that he gave not his whole heart to the worship of the Living God. "Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem." For many generations the worship of Chemosh was practised in the land of Judah, and it was not until the reign of Josiah that the image of this false god was destroyed, and the abominable rites accompanying this idol worship were abolished out of the land. At the disruption of the kingdom in the reign of Rehoboam, Moab as a tributary state was attached to the northern realm.

Under Omri and Ahab the Moabites seem to have been treated with much severity; for although the country was not as large as the county of Huntingdon, yet were the Moabites compelled to pay an enormous tribute of 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams with the wool, a heavy impost which could only be paid by a people possessing great wealth of natural resources.

That Moab though small was a rich and fruitful land appears manifest from many allusions to its fertility. Lot chose this district because it was well watered and afforded abundant pasture for his flocks. Balak, the king, set forth the fertility of his country when he said, "Shall I come before the Lord with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil?" Not only was Mesha, king of Moab, able to pay an enormous tribute to Ahab, but the Moabites in spite of that supported themselves in wealth and prosperity; for when Jehoshaphat, having defeated the Moabites at Berachah, came with his people to take away the spoil, they found among the dead bodies riches in abundance, and precious jewels which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days in gathering the spoil, it was so much.

The prophet Isaiah thus makes reference to the fertility of ancient Moab:—"The waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away,

the grass faileth, there is no green thing. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows. . . . . The fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah : the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness : her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea. Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah : I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh : for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field ; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting : the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses ; I have made their vintage shouting to cease." Dr. Tristram, who visited Moab a few years ago, says : "To be again on the open plain with its long stretches of grass gave a pleasurable sensation of freedom after our most enjoyable time in the rocky valleys. Much of the country was under cultivation, the Abou Endi on one side of us, the Beni Sakk'r on the other ; tents in every hollow, countless flocks and camels, all bespoke security, and mutton and milk in abundance. . . . . East of Dibon no plough disturbs the soil, and consequently the ground is firmer, and there is a nearer approach to turf in the character of the herbage. The whole

of it, far as the eye could reach or glass sweep, was dotted with flocks and herds of sheep and goats, each small flock with their attendant shepherd, often a child ; but the tents or homestead remained invisible until in some little depression of a few feet we would suddenly ride close upon a group of low black specks of camels' hair, the homes of the Beni Sakk'r. The tribe was now distributed all over this district, while the early spring grass was shooting, which in the summer here is completely burnt up. Here one can well understand the reproach of Deborah, 'Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks?' No wonder with such a country that the sheep-masters elected to remain on this side of Jordan."

Chapter III.

TRANSLATION OF THE INSCRIPTION.

1.

I AM Mesha, son of Chemosh-gad, king of Moab, the Dibonite.

2. My father reigned over Moab thirty years, and I have reigned after my father.

3. And I have built this sanctuary for Chemosh in Karchah, a sanctuary of

4. salvation, for he saved me from all aggressors, and made me look upon all mine enemies with contempt.

5. Omri was king of Israel, and oppressed Moab during many days, and Chemosh was angry with his

6. aggressions. His son succeeded him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab. In my days he said,

7. Let us go, and I will see my desire upon him

and his house, and Israel said, I shall destroy it for ever. Now Omri took

8. the land of Medeba, and occupied it in his day, and in the days of his son, forty years. And Chemosh had mercy on it in my time.

9. And I built Baal-meon and made therein the ditch, and I built Kiriathaim.

10. And the men of Gad dwelled in the country of Ataroth from ancient times, and the king of Israel fortified Ataroth.

11. I assaulted the wall and captured it, and killed all the warriors of the city

12. for the well-pleasing of Chemosh and Moab, and I removed from it all the spoil, and offered it

13. before Chemosh in Kirjath; and I placed therein the men of Siran, and the men of Mochrath.

14. And Chemosh said to me, Go take Nebo against Israel, and I

15. went in the night and I fought against it from the break of day till noon, and I took it:

16. and I killed in all seven thousand men, but I did not kill the women and

17. maidens, for I devoted them to Ashtar-Chemosh; and I took from it

18. the vessels of Jehovah, and offered them before Chemosh. And the king of Israel fortified

19. Jahaz, and occupied it, when he made war against me, and Chemosh drove him out before me, and

20. I took from Moab two hundred men in all, and placed them in Jahaz, and took it

21. to annex it to Dibon. I built Karchah the wall of the forest, and the wall

22. of the Hill. I have built its gates and I have built its towers. I have

23. built the palace of the king, and I made the prisons for the criminals within

24. the wall. And there were no wells in the interior of the wall in Karchah. And I said to all the people,

25. 'Make you every man a well in his house.' And I dug the ditch for Karchah with the chosen men of

26. Israel. I built Aroer, and I made the road across the Arnon.

27. I took Beth-Bamoth for it was destroyed. I built Bezer for it was cut down

28. by the armed men of Dibon, for all Dibon was now loyal; and I reigned

29. from Bikran which I added to my land. And I built

30. Beth-Gamul, and Beth-Diblathaim, and Beth-Baal-Meon, and I placed there the poor

31. people of the land. And as to Horonaim, the men of Edom dwelt therein, on the descent from of old.

32. And Chemosh said to me, Go down, make war against Horonaim, and take it. And I assaulted it,

33. And I took it, for Chemosh restored it in my days. Wherefore I made . . . . . .

34. . . . . year . . . . . and I . . . . . .

. . . . . .

The above rendering follows, for the most part, the translations of M. Ganneau and Dr. Ginsburg. The lacunæ or gaps are filled up with the most approved conjectures, in order that the translation may present to our readers a continuous narrative.

Chapter IV.

GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE INSCRIPTION.

THE inscription as regards its subject matter may be divided into five sections. Section I., including the first four verses, refers to the erection of the monument, and the dedication of this high place to Chemosh, the national god of the Moabites. Having given his own name and that of his father, Mesha states, perhaps as something to be proud of, the long duration of his father's reign, and then proceeds to speak of the erection of this monument at Karchah, probably the Acropolis of Dibon, as a thank-offering to Chemosh, a token of gratitude for deliverance from oppression, and triumph over all his enemies.

Section II., including verses 5, 6, 7, 8, is a retrospect, wherein Mesha states the oppression to which his kingdom was subjected by Omri, king of Israel, and that this oppression was permitted

by Chemosh, because he was angry with his people. Ahab, the son and successor of Omri, resolved not to relax his iron grasp upon the land, but set his heart upon the utter discomfiture and complete humiliation of the country of Moab. Omri commenced the subjugation of the land by occupying the stronghold of Medeba, and this subjugation continued during the whole reign of Omri, as well as that of his son Ahab, for the period of forty years.

Section III., including verses from 9 to 21, relates the campaign of Mesha against Israel, including an account of the capture, restoration, and fortification of several cities. Chemosh at length has mercy on his land, and Mesha, under the guidance and protection of his god, took Medeba; then marching forward he seized and fortified Baal-meon. From this place Mesha proceeds to the stronghold of Kiriathaim, which he also captures; next he besieges, assaults, and captures Ataroth, possessed from of old by men of Gad. Having mercilessly destroyed the warriors, he brought the spoil and the inhabitants to the temple of Chemosh at Kirjath, and in accordance with ancient custom consecrated them to destruction, as the first fruits of his conquest.

Having destroyed "the men of Gad who dwelt in Ataroth from time of yore," Mesha repeopled the dismantled and desolate city by men from Siran and Mochrath. In obedience to the command of Chemosh, Mesha proceeds against Nebo;

and by stealing a march at night under cover of the darkness, he surprises the garrison at daybreak, and after a severe struggle, prolonged till noon, he captured the city, slew 7000 men, but devoted the women and maidens to Ashtar-Chemosh. From a sanctuary of Jehovah, in Nebo, Mesha took away the sacred vessels and consecrated them to Chemosh. The fortress of Jahaz next fell before the assaults of this warrior-king, and was annexed to Dibon.

Section IV., including ten verses, from 21 to 31, records the public works undertaken by king Mesha after he had driven out the invaders, and restored liberty to the land of Moab.

His first great undertaking is stated to have been the restoration of Karchah, the citadel or palace-hill of Dibon, and the construction of its pleasure grounds, bulwarks, towers, gateways, royal residence, waterworks, prison, and the cutting of a moat around the stronghold. Mesha next devoted his energies to the restoration of Aroer, and the construction of a road across the vast chasm of the Arnon valley, after which he rebuilt Beth-Bamoth, destroyed by the enemy, and Bezer, despoiled by rebels of Dibon, now loyal to their king. He added Bikran to his dominions, and having repaired Beth-Diblathaim, Beth-Baal-Meon, &c., he repeopled these cities with faithful subjects.

During the forty years' occupation of the kingdom of Moab, the Jewish invaders either permitted

many places to go to decay, or they destroyed them during the protracted warfare. Hence the reparation and restoration of those cities undertaken by king Mesha.

Section V., including four verses, from verse 31 to the end of the inscription, records an expedition of Mesha, undertaken by the express command of Chemosh, against Horonaim, a city south of the Arnon, occupied by men of Edom; and the successful campaign of the king against the Edomites.

Chapter V.

EXPOSITION OF THE INSCRIPTION.

(I.)

" AM Mesha."

Mesha, the victorious king of Moab, who erected this tablet, is evidently identical with Mesha, the warrior-king, whose bloody campaign is recorded in 2 Kings. This appears manifest from the fact that he was a vassal king of the king of Israel, that he waged a terrible warfare against the successors of Ahab, that he was contemporary with Ahab, and exhibited great military prowess in the liberation of his country from the oppression of Jewish invaders.

Mesha, king of Moab, was a contemporary of Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram, kings of Israel. He was a man of great military prowess, and the desperate struggle made by him for the liberation of his country is vividly recorded in the third chapter of 2 Kings.

King David conquered Moab, which thus became

a tributary state of the Jewish kingdom. At the disruption of the Jewish kingdom, the country of Moab was annexed to the kingdom of Israel. Omri and Ahab appear to have treated the Moabites with great severity, for though Moab was but a very small district, not larger than a small English county, yet these monarchs imposed upon it the enormous tribute of one hundred thousand rams and one hundred thousand lambs with the wool.

The country of Moab was undoubtedly a pastoral district of great fertility, and Mesha is spoken of as a sheep master whose wealth consisted for the most part in flocks and herds. When Ahab was slain by the Syrians at Ramoth Gilead, Mesha, burning with a desire to liberate his kingdom from Jewish oppression, took advantage of the confusion consequent upon the death of Ahab, and rebelled against Israel.

During the short and feeble reign of Ahaziah no attempt was made to bring back Moab to submission, but when Jehoram, brother of Ahaziah, succeeded to the throne of Israel, one of his first acts was to make a vigorous effort to bring the Moabites back again to their former tributary condition. He formed an alliance with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the king of Edom; then by a circuitous route through Edom and round the south side of the Dead Sea, the united armies of these three monarchs marched towards

the territory of the rebellious kingdom. The disordered soldiers of Moab, eager for spoil, and led on by their warrior-king, hastened to give battle to the enemy. Soon, however, they were surprised by the great strength of the united armies; a panic having ensued, they became completely disorganized, and were mercilessly slaughtered by the invaders. Their country was devastated, king Mesha together with the remnant of his army, driven back by overwhelming numbers, took refuge in Kir-haraseth, the frontier stronghold of Moab, and defended himself with the energy of despair. Choosing 700 warriors, he sallied forth from the fortress and made a vigorous attempt to cut his way through the beleaguering host, but driven back he was held at bay by the three united armies, and thus closely besieged was reduced to the last extremity.

Then it was that Mesha, impressed with the conviction that Chemosh was angry with his people and must be propitiated, resolved upon a terrible deed, the deed of one ready to make any sacrifice for the freedom and independence of his country.

Mounting the wall of the fortress, Mesha appeared in full sight of the beleaguering army, accompanied by his eldest son, that would have reigned in his stead, and to the amazement and horror even of his enemies, offered up his first-born as a burnt offering to Chemosh, the ruthless fire god of Moab. This same bloody sacrifice was threatened

by Balak, a former king of Moab, who was prevented from executing the atrocious deed by the wise counsel of Balaam.

The horrible sacrifice perpetrated by Mesha seems to have had the desired effect, for we are told of the invaders, "that they departed from him, and there was great indignation against Israel."

It ought to be noticed in connection with the siege of Kir-haraseth, that Mesha showed especial wrath towards the king of Edom, for when the 700 warriors made a sally from the fortress they tried to break through unto the king of Edom . . . and it is not at all improbable that when the three armies were separated, the army of Edom was followed and overtaken by Mesha, who, filled with indignation and savage vengeance, fell upon the king of Edom and having slain him burned the body into lime, as spoken of by the prophet Amos. "Thus saith the Lord ; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime."

Various explanations have been offered to account for Jehoram and Jehoshaphat in this expedition leading their armies into Moab by the dangerous and circuitous route round the southern shore of the Dead Sea. None of these explanations were satisfactory until the inscription on the Moabite stone gave the true solution by stating that Mesha had already seized, fortified, and occu-

pied the towns on the northern frontier, and on account of this occupation an attack from the north would have been utterly impracticable. Thus does this ancient inscription corroborate and supplement the sacred record.

(I.) "SON OF CHEMOSH-GAD."

Chemosh-Gad, the father and predecessor of Mesha, was named after two gods, namely, Chemosh, the national god of Moab, and Gad, recognized by all Canaanitish nations as the god of Fortune. In ancient times it was a common custom to name persons after the gods they worshipped, as Eliakim, Eleazar, Elishama, Elijah, Elizabeth, &c., from *El* or *El*oah the true God; Joshua, Josiah, Joash, Jehoram, Jehoiakim, &c., from Jehovah; Baalam, Ethbaal, Jezebel, Hannibal, Asdrubal, Isabel, &c., from Baal or Bel; Nebuchadnezzar, Nabo-polassar, from Nebo, &c.

From the fact that Mesha makes no mention of his ancestors, it may not unreasonably be inferred that Chemosh-Gad was the founder of a new dynasty of Moab; and, moreover, as he reigned for the long period of thirty years, probably he began to reign shortly after Omri gained undisputed possession of the throne of Israel.

(II.) "THE DIBONITE."

Dibonite, a native of Dibon, now Dhibân, a city about three miles north of the River Arnon. Pro-

bably the family of Mesha belonged to this place, hence the probable cause of the triumphal monument being set up at Dibon.

Dibon, the Greek Δαιβων, was an ancient city of Moab, situated north of the River Arnon. Its great antiquity is shown by the fact that it is mentioned in the Amorites' song of victory recorded in Numbers xxi., "Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon." It was taken and rebuilt by the children of Gad, but as the tribes of Reuben and Gad were composed of pastoral people who freely roamed over the regions allotted to them, and thus did not strictly observe the limits of their respective territories, we find in Joshua, that Dibon is mentioned as one of the towns of the tribe of Reuben. It is probably the same place as Dibon-Gad, a halting place of the Israelites in their journey through the land of Moab. In Isaiah it is thought that Dibon is referred to under the name of Dimon: "The waters of Dimon shall be full of blood: for I will bring upon Dimon, lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land."

Isaiah speaks of Dibon as a high place: "He is gone to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep," and Jeremiah says:—"Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, *come down* from thy glory." From these passages it would seem that the town occupied an elevated position, and this is confirmed by the supposition that glory in the latter passage means stronghold.

Eusebius in his Onomasticon calls it Δηβων and describes it as Κωμη παμμεγεθης, a very large village in his time. At present there are extensive ruins on the Roman Road, about three miles north of the Arnon (Wady Mojeb), supposed to be the ancient Dibon, but all modern travellers describe these ruins as lying low. These ruins are still called Dhibân, and are evidently situated on the border-land between Moab and Israel. The place has gained additional fame from the fact that the patriarchal Moabite stone was found amid its ruins. It appears from this triumphal tablet, that Dhibân was the native place of Chemosh-Gad, founder of a new Moabitish dynasty, and father of Mesha, the celebrated warrior-king. Jerome speaks of Dibon as the chief place of the worship of Chemosh, and this may account for the stone being found there.

Dr. Tristram, who visited the spot a few years ago, says :—"Dibon is a twin city upon two adjacent knolls, the ruins covering not only the tops but the sides to their base, and surrounded by one common wall. All the hills are limestone, and there is no trace of any basalt but what has been carried here by man. Still there are many basaltic blocks dressed, and often with marks of lime on them, evidently used in masonry, and we found a few traces of carvings on other stones. The place is full of caverns, cisterns, and rude semi-circular arches, like the rest.

"We went to see the spot where the famous Moabite stone or monolith of king Mesha was found. It is quite within the old city walls, and near what we presume was the gateway, close to where the road has crossed it. Very near this spot it was afterwards buried, when the dispute about its proprietorship arose among the Hamîdé, and it was then, as is too well known, broken by one party of the rival claimants. From all we heard from Mr. Klein, its first discoverer, and from what Zattam pointed out to us of its position, it seems to me highly improbable that the stone has been for 2,500 years exposed to the light of day, still less that it could have been originally set up in the spot where Mr. Klein saw it lying with the inscription uppermost. I do not presume to guess where Korcha was, nor where the stone was erected by king Mesha, but seeing that all the basalt blocks must have been brought here from some distance, and that there are many others at Dhibân, many times the size and weight of this tablet (for though it has been called 'this huge block of basalt' it only measured $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 2 feet), it seems most reasonable to conjecture that it has been removed from its original position, and used up as building material by the Romans or some of their predecessors, who were ignorant of, or indifferent to, its import; and that after lying embedded and secure for ages, it has through the progress of dilapidation or by earthquake been thrown down,

or fallen from its place, and the carefully preserved inscription been again exposed to day. From the appearance of the ruins near, and from the replies of the Arabs to my inquiries, I cannot but believe that the exposure of the celebrated monolith dates only from the earthquake of January, 1837. This earthquake was the most destructive of any on record in Syria, and caused a fearful sacrifice of human life at Safed, in Galilee, where several thousand persons were buried under the ruins. As far as we can trace it, the axis of the disturbance must have passed very near Dibon. Many of the Arabs remember a terrific earthquake which occurred when they were children, and which overthrew many columns and arches in the old cities. Considering the comparative freshness of the inscription on the Moabite stone, it may probably have been exposed for not more than the last thirty-five years."

(III.) "And I Built this Sanctuary."

Mesha erects this monument as a record and memorial of his victories. That it was customary for conquerors to set up monuments in commemoration of victories is evident from certain passages in Scripture, *e. g.* When the Israelites smote the Philistines. "Then Samuel took a *stone* and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer; saying, hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Again: "David *set up a memorial* when he re-

turned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of Salt."

Mesha dedicates this monument to Chemosh, his national god, and calls it a stone of salvation, because it was to be commemorative of that divine help by which was effected the salvation of his kingdom by its deliverance from a foreign yoke.

(3.) "FOR CHEMOSH."

Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites, and it appears from the book of Judges, where Jephthah, addressing the Ammonites, says:—"Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess?" that this divinity was also worshipped among the Ammonites; Chemosh, however, must not be confounded with Moloch, the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon introduced the worship of this false god among the Jews: "Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem," but after many generations this idol worship was abolished by Josiah.

The meaning of Chemosh is unknown. Jerome says that Dibon was the chief seat of his worship, and that Chemosh is but another name of Baal-Peor. Gesenius identifies him with Mars, and others, with Saturn, as the star of evil omen. According to Jewish tradition he was worshipped under the form of a black star.

Chemosh has been found on ancient coins stand-

ing upon a cippus between burning torches, holding a sword in the right and a lance and shield in the left hand.

(3.) "At Karchah."

"And I erected this stone to Chemosh at *Korcha*."

M. Ganneau at first rendered Korcha or Karchah as esplanade or platform; and E. Deutsch, in dissenting from this translation in a letter to the "Times," 3rd March, 1870, suggested that Korcha or Karka may be rendered Kerak, the present name of the district south of the Arnon. Other writers think that as the monument was found at Dibon, the native place of Mesha, and yet is described as situated at Korcha, that therefore Dibon and Korcha were either two names for the same place, or that Korcha was a part of Dibon, as Zion was part of Jerusalem, the Capitol part of Rome, the Acropolis part of Athens.

Four times in a boastful manner does Mesha make mention of Korcha. Now the word literally means baldness, a thing rather to be ashamed of than to be made a matter of boasting; and it is somewhat singular that both Isaiah and Jeremiah in their denunciations against Moab apply this identical word against the Moabites.

The Hebrew prophets often make use of a paronomasia or play upon a word, and it is just possible that having seen or heard of this memorable inscription they purposely made use of

the word. "On all their heads shall be *baldness* and every beard cut off." "Every head shall be *bald* and every beard clipped." As if to say, king Mesha boasts of Korcha ; well, the time will come when his subjects shall have *Korcha* (baldness) on all their heads. Baldness and cutting off the beard seem to have been a characteristic of those Moabites against whom these prophecies were uttered; and it is very remarkable that among the figures of Moabites found at Ipsamboul, one or two are represented with the hair shaven off in the front part of the head, and the whiskers cut off. Professor Davidson thinks that Korcha may signify literally bald or bare, and was probably applied to a bare height outside Dibon, on which stood the royal citadel.

While Mr. Palmer was at Dhibân a few years ago, he inquired of the Arabs where the Moabite stone was found, and the reply was, "between the *harathein*," *i.e.* the two *hariths*. On further examination it was discovered that *harith* is still applied by the Bedouins to a hill on which a town is built, and *harathein* therefore means the two hills upon which Dibon stood. Among the learned there is still great diversity of opinion as to the interpretation, some rendering it a district of Dibon, some a fortified suburb, others the citadel of the town. It appears from line 21 that Korcha was built by Mesha, that it contained a forest surrounded by a wall, besides gates, towers, and the

palace or royal residence of the king. Probably therefore Korcha was to Dibon what Zion was to Jerusalem, namely, the palace hill of the city. Dr. Tristram remarks that although Burckhardt and other travellers mention Dhibân as being situated on low ground, that viewed from the east it is on high ground though low from the western ridge, and being built on two hills, the first rising from the east, the cry "come down" would be exceedingly applicable.

(IV.) "A Sanctuary of Salvation."

In giving a name to the stone, and the reasons for giving the name, compare the language of Mesha with that of Samuel, when the latter set up a stone and called it Ebenezer. Mesha stigmatizes the Jewish invaders as despoilers—a word variously rendered—persecutors, robbers, plunderers, birds of prey.

(V.) "Omri was King of Israel."

Omri, king of Israel, is stated to have oppressed Moab, and this passage seems to supplement the biblical account of this monarch.

We know that David subjugated Moab and reduced the country to complete vassalage; and so much was the power of the Moabites weakened by the slaughter of David, that it must have been a considerable period before the Moabites could muster sufficient force to strike a blow for freedom. Now Omri did not succeed peacefully to the throne,

inasmuch as Tibni set himself up as a competitor for royal honours. For four years the kingdom of Israel was disturbed by conflicting parties ; and it is not at all unlikely that Moab having recovered from her prostration took advantage of the distracted state of the land of Israel, and made an attempt to shake off Israel's galling yoke.

Omri, a resolute, energetic king, and mighty warrior, on gaining undisputed possession of the throne, would probably lose no time in turning his attention to the revolted Moabites, and hastening to Moab, reconquered the country and chastised the rebels with severity, imposing upon them that enormous impost mentioned in 2 Kings.

The inscription goes on to state that the long continued occupation of Moab, and the oppression shown by the foreign invaders, was permitted by Chemosh, because for some reason not stated that deity was angry with his people. In everything Mesha recognizes the overruling power of his god, and readily obeys the supposed divine commands. Mighty deeds are accomplished under the guidance and protection of Chemosh ; victory is the fruit of his pleasure, while reverses are attributed to his anger ; so that in every undertaking Mesha shows himself to be an earnest devotee of his religious convictions and honours his god with all his heart.

The spoils of victory are dedicated to Chemosh ; to him this monument is erected as a thank-offering for his triumphs ; and to appease divine anger

Mesha, as we know from the Bible, is even willing to offer up his eldest son as a propitiatory sacrifice. Thus does the inscription on the Moabite stone harmonize with the Sacred Histories.

Omri, the founder of a dynasty of kings of Israel, was originally a captain of the host of Israel. When Zimri had rebelled against Elah, and established himself as king, then Omri marched against Zimri, who occupied the throne of Tirzah, and reduced him to such straits, that after a miserable reign of seven days Zimri set the palace on fire, and perished in the flames. Omri was supported in his pretentions to the vacant throne by the soldiers, but a rival competitor for regal power arose in the person of Tibni. Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts ; half of the people followed Tibni, the son of Ginnath, to make him king ; and half followed Omri. But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni, the son of Ginnath ; so Tibni died and Omri reigned. This hostile state of matters, in which the nation was divided against itself, continued for the long period of four years, and must have tended to weaken and impoverish the kingdom of Israel. At length Omri, vested with full authority, began to reign in the year 929 B.C., and continued king of Israel for twelve years. He bought the hill of Samaria and founded the city of Samaria, which continued to be the capital of the kingdom of Israel until the Babylonian

captivity. Omri was an ungodly monarch, and at his death in 918 B.C. he was succeeded by his weak and wicked son Ahab.

(VI.) "HIS SON SUCCEEDED HIM."

Ahab, the son and successor of Omri, released not his iron grasp upon Moab, but continued to exact the heavy tribute imposed upon the country.

Ahab, son and successor of Omri, reigned for twenty-two years, from 918 till 897 B.C. He is described as doing "evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him." Not only did he maintain the worship of the calves, but having married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon, and becoming the tool of his wicked wife, this weak and unstable monarch introduced the worship of Baal into Israel, and persecuted the prophets of the Lord.

He must, however, have been a man of energy and taste, for not only did he build cities and walls, but he also made a palace and pleasure grounds. He fought against the Syrians, and for two years was successful. In a third campaign Ahab, accompanied by Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, made an expedition against Ramoth-Gilead then held by the Syrians. Though disguised Ahab was mortally wounded in battle, and died in his chariot the same evening.

Ahaziah, the son of Ahab and Jezebel, succeeded his father as monarch of Israel, and reigned two

years, 897-896 B.C. He followed the evil ways of his parents, and his short reign was an unhappy one. Ahaziah received a fatal injury by a fall through a lattice in Samaria, and died shortly afterwards.

Jehoram, a second son of Ahab and Jezebel, succeeded his brother Ahaziah as king of Israel. He reigned twelve years (896-884 B.C.), but having in conjunction with Ahaziah, king of Judah, made an expedition against the Syrians in Ramoth-Gilead, he was wounded in battle, and subsequently put to death by his general Jehu.

(VII.) The king of Israel resolved not to be satisfied with anything short of the utter discomfiture and complete humiliation of the Moabites. In this resolution the monarch was confirmed by the children of Israel, who desired *to destroy Moab with an everlasting destruction.* This passage is analogous in its phraseology to the passage in Isaiah :—" Israel shall be saved by Jehovah with an everlasting salvation," a mode of expression of high antiquity, and consequently a proof of the great age of this venerable stone.

The phrase *in my days* used also in verse nine, is used in an antithesis understood, to *in the days of my father, Chemosh-Gad,* and not only implies that Mesha was a contemporary of Ahab, but also that the re-conquest of Moab by Omri took place in the days of Mesha's father.

(VIII.) "OMRI TOOK THE LAND OF MEDEBA."

Omri probably fortified and occupied Medeba because of its strong military position. By making this fortress the base of operations he would be able to hold the whole neighbourhood in subjection. Such a mode of warfare was not uncommon; Eglon, king of Moab, occupied Jericho, the city of palm trees, in a similar manner, and having concentrated his troops in this spot he sallied forth in all directions, overran the land, and held the Israelites in subjection for eighteen years. The importance of Medeba will appear from the following sketch.

(8.) "AND OCCUPIED IT, ETC., FORTY YEARS."

The occupation of Medeba for the long period of *forty years* has caused some diversity of opinion. First it has been suggested that *forty* has to be regarded as a round number. Round numbers are often used both in sacred and profane history, and probably on the stone itself; so that, if required, *forty* might be regarded in this light. Schlottmann thinks that this is not necessary, and makes up the forty thus:—Four years of civil war between Omri and Tibni; twelve years for reign of Omri; twenty-two years for reign of Ahab; two years for Ahaziah; and two years of the reign of Jehoram. According to this calculation Mesha succeeded in driving the Israelitish invaders from Medeba and neighbourhood in the third year of Jehoram, and

therefore the monument would be set up at a subsequent period.

Dr. Weir has pointed out that the occupation of Medeba by Omri and his house for forty years exactly harmonizes with the duration of the dynasty of Omri, which, calculated from the close of the civil war with Tibni, extended over, according to the received chronology, exactly forty years, B.C. 924—B.C. 884. This calculation embraces the whole reigns of Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, and therefore fixes the liberation of Moab not earlier than the commencement of the reign of Jehu.

Again it has been suggested that calculating backwards from the first year of Jehoram, when the army of Israel returned home from the siege of Kir-haraseth, brings us back to the days when Omri was a young energetic general of the hosts of Israel, and it is not at all improbable that as Joab, the general of David, conquered Rabbath Ammon for his sovereign, so in like manner Omri, the general of king Baasha, occupied Medeba for his royal master. Whatever explanation of the forty years' occupation is accepted, it seems clear that there is no necessary conflict between the inscription and the sacred history.

Medeba, Greek Μαιδαβα, literally meaning "quiet waters," was a town of great antiquity in the land of Moab. It is first spoken of in the triumphal hymn recorded in Numbers xxi., from which it seems to be the limit of the district of Heshbon:

"Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba." The town was surrounded by grassy downs or pastoral plains called the "plains of Medeba." It was allotted to the children of Reuben, and in the reign of David was the scene of a decisive battle, wherein Joab, the general of king David, gained a victory over the Ammonites, who had put themselves in battle array before the gates of the city of Medeba. Medeba is named in the denunciation of Moab by Isaiah, and from the passage, "Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba," it appears to have been a sanctuary of the Moabites in the days of Ahaz. The town is celebrated in the battles of the Maccabæan princes, and in early times was the seat of a Christian bishopric, special mention being made of it at the Council of Chalcedon. Medeba has retained its name down to the present day, and is described by travellers as situated in a pastoral district four miles south-east of Heshbon, lying on a rounded hill. A large tank, broken columns, and extensive foundations are found among its ruins. Hitzig thinks that Medeba is from a Sanscrit word meaning *place of sacrifice*, and that the name was given to it in the remotest antiquity, when it was occupied by non-Semitic people.

Dr. Tristram says that, judging from the present ruins, "Medeba has been a city of great importance, and that its vast reservoir, some walls still

standing, and a few erect columns form conspicuous features in the landscape from a distance. Medeba is not as it appeared to Palmer, looking at it from the higher ground on the westward, in a hollow, but on the top of a 'tell,' round which the old city extended a considerable way into the plain eastward, bounded on the north by the wady of the same name. Taking the top of this 'tell' as our centre, where there has evidently been a sort of citadel, we command a view of the whole extent of the ruins. In few places are the lines of roads and streets more clearly to be traced. A gentle declivity on the west side is immediately succeeded by a rise, honeycombed by a labyrinth of caves, which have all once been a depôt for the supply of water stored up for summer use. Beyond the base of the hill the city proper does not seem to have extended westward; but the slope has been a wide suburb of scattered buildings, with several roads, still plainly marked by the parallel double line of stones, and half way up has stood a large temple. This has still two columns standing close together, erect, conspicuous objects from afar. They are only 18 feet high; across them has been laid a large block of stone, which has at least performed the useful office of keeping the pillars erect."

(IX.) "I BUILT BAAL-MEON, AND MADE THEREIN THE DITCH."

Having taken Medeba, Mesha marches forward

and occupies Baal-meon, about two hours' distance; perhaps because this town was midway between Nebo and Kiriathaim, two cities in the list of places to be conquered, and might therefore be a centre of operation for making attacks; or Baal-meon may have been occupied thus early in order that it might be a place of retreat in case of being driven back from the surrounding cities. The ditch was either an ordinary fosse, or a large tank to hold water in case of siege.

Baal-meon, also called Beth-meon and Beth-baal-meon, was a town of ancient Moab. The fact that the name is compounded of Baal affords a presumption in favour of the high antiquity of Baal-worship among the Moabites, an opinion confirmed by the passage, "Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people." It is thought that this false god was worshipped in Moab under the name of Baal-peor; and we know that the Israelites on passing through the borders of Moab were induced to join in Baal-worship, for "Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead: and the anger of the Lord was kindled. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor. Thus they provoked the Lord to anger with their inventions, and the plague broke in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment, and so the plague was stayed."

Baal-meon belonged to the tribe of Reuben, for "The children of Reuben built Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Kirjathaim, and Nebo, and Baal-meon, (their names being changed,) and Shibmah: and gave other names unto the cities which they builded." Joel, a descendant of Reuben, is said to have dwelt in Aroer, even unto Nebo and Baal-meon. In the days of the prophet Ezekiel Baal-meon was a place of considerable distinction, for it is mentioned, together with Beth-jeshimoth and Kiriathaim, as one of the four towns forming the glory of the country of Moab.

In the time of Eusebius and Jerome the town existed under the name of Balmen or Balmano, and is spoken of as a considerable town—*vicus maximus*—nine miles from Heshbon, and situated near the mountain of the hot springs. Baal-meon is reputed to be the birthplace of Elisha.

The vast ruins of Ma'in, situated about three miles south-west of Medeba, represent the ancient Baal-meon. Dr. Tristram says:—"The chase had brought us on to the hills of Ma'in, with its ruins of vast extent. These occupy the crests and slopes of four adjacent hills, one having evidently been the central city, and connected with the next by a wide causeway. The remains are of the ordinary type, foundations, fragments of walls, lines of streets, old arches, many carved stones, wells and cisterns innumerable. Some curious cavernous dwellings, built

up with arches and fragments of old columns, are still occasionally used by the Arabs as folds and sleeping places. The view from the highest crest is very fine. There is a clear exposure of the southern wall of the Zerka Ma'in ravine; and northwards Jerusalem, Gerizim, Tabor, Hermon, and Mount Gilead can all be descried through the distant haze by the glass."

This highest crest was probably the spot to which Balak brought Balaam, as the second position from which the soothsayer might view the hosts of Israel.

(9.) "I BUILT KIRIATHAIM."

This town was two hours' march from Baal-meon, and being evacuated and dismantled by the Jewish invaders, Mesha rebuilds and fortifies the place, thus making effective provision for the issue of the campaign.

Kiriathaim was one of the ancient cities of Moab. Kiriath, or Kirjath, is the ancient word for a city; for although Ar also means city, yet Kiriath is the more archaic word; aim is the common dual termination, so that Kiriathaim literally signifies the "double city," and the name has probably reference to the two parts of which the city consisted. Compare Stanley on the dual form—Jerusalaim.

Kiriathaim was taken and rebuilt by the children of Reuben, and in the time of Ezekiel was one of

the four cities that formed the glory of Moab. It is also mentioned in the denunciations of Jeremiah. "Woe unto Nebo, for it is spoiled; Kiriathaim is confounded and taken; judgment is come upon Kiriathaim and Baal-meon." The place was standing in the time of Eusebius, who says that it was ten miles from Medeba, situated ἐπι τον βαριν, upon the Baris, but whether this means a river or fortress is uncertain.

In the great edition of the Bible of 1611 the letter yod is represented by i, but this letter almost invariably becomes j in subsequent editions. Kiriathaim is one of the few words that has retained the i. Diebrich has shown that Kiriathaim is represented by the present ruin of Kureiyat under the south side of Jebel Attarus.

Dr. Tristram says: "Kureiyat was the next place to be visited, about three miles south-east of Attarus, and situated on sister hillocks, half-a-mile apart, both covered by the ancient city. The ruins are extensive, but utterly featureless; and between them and the Arnon are very few remains of any extent. We can scarcely doubt that this is either Kerioth or Kiriathaim. A southern Kureitun near Kerak, also a twin town, has already been described. One of these sets of ruins is therefore probably the Kerioth; the other the Kiriathaim of Jeremiah. Burckhardt has suggested the inconsiderable ruins of Et Teim, near Medeba, as Kiriathaim, but he did not visit them. We found them insignificant, and

I can see no ground for the conjecture, nor any tenable argument for rejecting the claims of Kureiyat to be the scriptural site."

When Balaam came from the mountains of the east to curse the Israelites, Balak probably met the prophet at the banks of the Arnon, the frontier of his kingdom; and first he conducted Balaam to Kirjath Huzoth, the city of streets, thought to be Kiriathaim, and from the high place close at hand —namely, the summit of Attarus, with its commanding prospect—the soothsayer beheld for the first time the encampments of Israel.

(X.) "FOR THE MEN OF GAD DWELLED IN THE LAND OF ATAROTH FROM OF OLD, AND THE KING OF ISRAEL FORTIFIED ATAROTH."

In the Book of Numbers we read that the children of Gad requested of Moses, among other places, the town of Ataroth, because the country around was good for cattle; and, moreover, that the children of Gad built Ataroth, the very place which the stone declares to have been inhabited by men of Gad from days of yore.

"How remarkable," says one writer, "that not only the name of Ataroth, but of six or seven other places mentioned in these verses, should have sprung to light 3,000 years after they were carved upon the stone, and that the historical statement from the pen of Moses should be verified to the very letter by the chisel of Mesha's workmen."

(XI.) The king of Israel had fortified Ataroth, but Mesha, having besieged the town and captured the wall, put to death all the warriors, but reserving the inhabitants together with the spoil, he took them to Kirjath, where they were offered up in the temple of Chemosh as the first fruits of victory.

Ataroth is the name of several towns in Palestine, on both sides of the Jordan. The Ataroth in the land of Moab was taken and rebuilt by the children of Gad, and as ruins have been found near Jebel Attarus, the word is supposed to be connected with the name of the mountain, and the situation of Ataroth is also thought to have been in the same locality. Although this connection is doubted by biblical students, yet Dr. Tristram seems to have no doubt on the subject, for in his recent visit to the place he says: "Another expedition from the hot springs was to Attarus, the ancient Ataroth, situated about three miles from Kureiyat, the ancient Kiriathaim. Unwrought stones lying in heaps, ranges of broken walls, lines of foundations scattered over a long ridge, large caverns and circular cisterns, such is all that remains of Ataroth. The view from the ruined keep is wide and grand.... Though Ataroth has been on the top of a hill, yet the summit is a wide, flat platform; from this a gentle slope and rise leads us, by the side of an ancient Roman road, through a park-like country to Jebel Attarus, the old citadel, distant an hour's walk. . . . Equally clear seems the identification of Attarus, usually called Kirbet

Attarus, with the Ataroth of Scripture; as also the identification of Jebel Attarus with the biblical Atroth-Shophan. Jebel Attarus was for a long time thought to be Mount Pisgah, but this is a mistaken notion, for the latter mountain was more to the north-west. The words Ataroth, Atroth, Attarus, and Ashtaroth, the capital of Og, king of Bashan, are possibly derived from Ashtoreth, or Astarte, the chief female divinity of the Zidonians. The worship of Astarte, like the worship of Baal, was of great antiquity and widely spread among oriental nations, cities being named after her as early as the days of Abraham. Ishtar, an Assyrian goddess, is probably the same as Astarte, and her name is frequently found on inscriptions in Cyprus and Carthage.

Astarte is thought to be the moon goddess, the corresponding female divinity to Baal, the sun god, although by others she is identified with the planet Venus, as the goddess of the bright morning star. It has further been suggested that the Greek ἀστηρ and English *star* are derivatives from Astarte.

(XIII.) "AND I PLACED THEREIN (ATAROTH) THE MEN OF SIRAN, AND THE MEN OF MOCHRATH."

Siran is not a scriptural name, but as some scholars say the word ought to be rendered Siban, it is probably the same as Sibmah, a town in Moab taken and occupied by the children of Reuben.

From the catalogue of cities given in Joshua, "Kirjathaim, and Sibmah, and Zareth-shahar in the mount of the valley, and Beth-peor, and Ashdoth-pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth," the town of Sibmah was apparently close to the chief places taken by Mesha, and this renders the suggestion more probable that Siran is Sibmah.

From its mention in the denunciations of Isaiah and Jeremiah, Sibmah was famous for its vines and vineyards. "For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof. Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah."

The vineyards were devastated and the town destroyed by "the lords of the heathen," who at some time unknown appear to have laid waste the whole of that once smiling and fertile district. Sibmah existed in the days of Eusebius and Jerome, but no trace of it has been found by modern travellers.

Mochrath does not occur in the Bible, but as Mochrath in the Moabite language means the *morning*, while Shachrath means the *dawn*, it is thought that Mochrath is possibly the same place as Zareth-shahar, mentioned in the catalogue of Moabite cities as given by Joshua. The name is still used in the land of Moab, for Dr. Tristram, speaking of his visit to Kerak, says:—"To the south was pointed out the 'Wady of the Willows,

and among other names that of Mochrath, one of the unidentified names occurring on the Moabite stone.' . . . . We could see Kerak from Mahk-'henah, but the road close to it could be distinguished with the glass. It has been suggested that Mahk-'henah is the Arabic equivalent for 'Mochrath,' mentioned on the Moabite stone, as the place from which Mesha repeopled Ataroth after he had exterminated its former Israelitish inhabitants."

(XIV.) "AND CHEMOSH SAID, GO TAKE NEBO."

Although Mesha took Ataroth, it would appear that the victory was obtained at great cost; for instead of leading on his victorious troops he remained inactive until a direct command is received from Chemosh, and although Nebo is not mentioned as a strong place, yet Mesha deems it prudent to steal a march by night, and thus surprising the enemy he was able to conquer, more by stratagem than by an open fight.

Nebo was a town in the country of Moab, taken possession of and rebuilt by the children of Reuben. It was situated in a pastoral district and is mentioned in connection with Kiriathaim and Baal-meon. It is mentioned by Eusebius and Jerome, and the latter says that the image of Chemosh, that is, Belphegor or Baal-peor, resided at Nebo. The town was undoubtedly named after the god Nebo, and probably was connected with the mountain of that name.

Dr. Tristram says :—"Although Nebo had escaped modern research until 1864, the name and place were well known to early Christian writers, and Eusebius expressly mentions that it lay on the other side of Jordan in the land of Moab, and is shown to this day six miles to the west of Heshbon."

This Nebo was probably the old city mentioned in Isaiah,—"Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba," and which perished at the destruction of Moab, nor was again rebuilt. Nebo, the well-known deity of the Babylonians, probably gave name to both the town and mountain of the same name in the land of Moab. He is mentioned by Isaiah, "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth," and by Jeremiah—"Woe unto Nebo, for it is spoiled." The worship of Nebo was introduced into Assyria by Pul, king of Assyria, and the great temple, the ruins of which are still seen at the modern Birs Nimrod, was dedicated to this deity. A statue of Nebo was set up by Pul in Calah, the modern Nimrud, and this statue is now in the British Museum. The word means prophet or interpreter, and is often found in the composition of proper names as Nebuchadnezzar, Nabo-nassar, Nabo-polassar, &c.

Nebo was also a mountain in the land of Moab, from the summit of which Moses took his first and last view of the Promised Land. The position of the mount is minutely described in the

Bible. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died on Mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: because ye trespassed against me at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel. . . . . And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land. . . . . So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated."

There is something sublimely significant in this solemn description; and as one writer has remarked of the fact that Moses was buried in a valley over against Beth-peor:—"Yes, over against Beth-peor; to bear witness in death as he had done in life for

that Jehovah whose witness and ambassador he had been! Over against Beth-peor! that his silent, unknown grave might lift an eloquent and warning voice in the ears of the people whom he loved, and in the land of their heathenish corruptors, against the idolatry to which they were, alas! too prone. Surely if we had nothing else to interest us in the land of Moab, the fact that it was from the top of Pisgah, its noblest height, this mightiest of the prophets looked out with eye undimmed upon the Promised Land, that it was here on Nebo, its loftiest mountain, that he died his solitary death, that it was here in the valley over against Beth-peor he found his mysterious sepulchre, we have enough to enshrine the memory in our hearts."

Beautifully has Mrs. Alexander, a well-known poetess, caught up the thought, and exquisitely applied it in her "Burial of Moses."

"By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab
There lies a lonely grave.
And no man knows that sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er,
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.

"That was the grandest funeral
That ever passed on earth;
But no man heard the trampling,
Or saw the train go forth.

Noiselessly as the daylight
Comes back when night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek
Grows into the great sun.

" Noiselessly as the spring-time
Her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills
Open their thousand leaves ;
So without sound of music,
Or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown
The great procession swept.

" Perchance the bald old eagle,
On grey Beth-peor's height,
Out of his lonely eyrie
Looked on the wondrous sight ;
Perchance the lion stalking
Still shuns the hallowed spot,
For beast and bird have seen and heard
That which man knoweth not.

" This was the truest warrior
That ever buckled sword ;
This the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word ;
And never earth's philosopher
Traced with his golden pen
On the deathless page truths half so sage
As he wrote down for men.

" And had he not high honour,
The hillside for a pall,
To lie in state while angels wait
With stars for tapers tall.

And the dark rock-pines like tossing plumes
  Over his bier to wave ;
And God's own hand in that lonely land
  To lay him in the grave ?

" In that strange grave, without a name,
  Whence his uncoffined clay
Shall break again—O wondrous thought !—
  Before the Judgment Day,
And stand with glory wrapt around
  On the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife that won our life
  With the Incarnate Son of God.

" O wondrous grave in Moab's land !
  O dark Beth-Peor's hill !
Speak to these curious hearts of ours,
  And teach them to be still.
God hath his mysteries of grace,
  Ways that we cannot tell,
He hides them deep, like the hidden sleep
  Of him He loved so well."

Nebo seems to have been the summit or highest point of a mountain range or ridge called Pisgah, and this again was but part of the mountains of Abarim.

Until recent times writers were not agreed respecting the situation of Nebo, but Dr. Tristram has not only identified but proved also that Nebo was probably one of the sacrificial stations of Balak and Balaam. He says : " Anxious to verify exactly the view of Moses, we paid three visits to Nebo, but we were not so fortunate as on my former visit, when for the first time Nebo was identified. . . . .

However, after testing repeatedly every view in the neighbourhood, I am perfectly satisfied that there is none which equals in extent that from Nebo, *i.e.* from the flat ridge which rises slightly about half-a-mile behind the ruined city, and which I take to be the true field of Zophim, the top of Pisgah."

In Deuteronomy we read that from the summit of Nebo, "The Lord showed Moses all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." The description of the prospect from the top of Mount Nebo as given by Dr. Tristram reads like a commentary on these verses, and confirms in a remarkable way the account given in the sacred volume.

"To the eastward, as we turned round, the ridge seemed gently to slope for two or three miles, when a few small ruin-clad 'tells,' or hillocks, Heshbon, 'Ma'in,' and others broke the monotony of the outline, and then sweeping forth rolled in one vast unbroken expanse the goodly Belka, one boundless plain, stretching far into Arabia till lost in the horizon, one waving ocean of corn and grass. Not a tree, not a bush, not a house could be seen; but

the glass revealed the black tents dotted far and near. As the eye turned southward the peak of Jebel Shihan (Sihon) just stood out behind Jebel Attarus, and the rosy granite peaks of Arabia faded into the distance. Still turning westward, though the east side of the Dead Sea was too immediately beneath us to be visible, we could trace its western outline in its full extent. In the centre of the line a break and a green spot beneath it marked Engedi —the nest once of the Kenite, now of the wild goat. Behind we could trace the ridge of Hebron, as it lifted from the south-west, as far as Bethlehem and Jerusalem. There was the Mount of Olives, with the church on its top, the gap in the hills leading up from Jericho, and the rounded heights of Benjamin on the other side. Still turning northward, the eye was riveted by the deep Jordan valley, and the twin oases of Jericho. Closer still beneath us on this side the river had Israel's last camp extended, in front of the green fringe which peeped forth from under the terraces in our foreground. The dark sinuous bed of Jordan was soon lost in dim haze, then, looking over it, the eye rested on Gerizim's rounded top, and further still opened the plain of Esdraëlon, the shoulder of Carmel, or some other intervening height, just showing to the right Gerizim, while beyond it was a faint and distant bluish haze. Northward again rose the distinct outline of unmistakable Tabor, aided by which we could identify Gilboa and Little Hermon. Beyond, Hermon's

snowy top was mantled in cloud, and Lebanon's highest range must have been exactly shut behind it; while in front, due north of us, stretched in long line the dark forests of Gilead, terminating in Jebel Osha, behind Ramoth Gilead. To the north-east the vast Hauran or Bashan stretched beyond, and the vast range of Jebel Hauran, behind Bozrah, was distinctly visible."

XVII. "I DID NOT KILL THE WOMEN AND MAIDENS, FOR I DEVOTED THEM TO *Ashtar-Chemosh*."

Ashtar was a Phœnician god, the masculine companion to Astarte, the Phœnician goddess of the moon. Some think that Ashtar is but another name for Baal, the sun-god, and that the Ashtar-Chemosh of the Moabites was an androgynous deity, that is, a deity possessing the qualities both of man and woman. If this be so, then Ashtar-Chemosh corresponds to the Greek Aphrodite and the bearded Venus Amathusia.

XVIII. "I TOOK FROM IT THE VESSELS OF JEHOVAH."

The mention of *the vessels of Jehovah* which were taken from the temple of Nebo and presented to Chemosh seems to prove that the trans-Jordanic tribes, being far removed from Jerusalem, the central place of Jewish worship, had a sanctuary and ritual of their own.

Speaking of the fact that the name *Jehovah* appears on the Moabite stone, a writer remarks :— "The mention of Jehovah throws light upon another curious circumstance. It is well known that the sacred word *Jehovah*, the Tetragrammaton of the Greeks, was held so sacred by the Jews of later times, that it was never pronounced except by the High Priest, and that only once a year, on the day of atonement when he entered the most holy place; and we read in the Mishna that all the priests and people in the outer court who heard it had to kneel down, bow, and fall upon their faces exclaiming, 'Blessed be the Name of His Glorious Majesty for ever;' and the Mishna further records 'that any layman' who pronounced this incommunicable name 'forfeited his life in this world and in the world to come.' That this reverence for the awful name of Jehovah was obtained at a very early period is evident not only from the testimony of Philo and Josephus, but from the fact that it is never used in the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, the New Testament, or in the Samaritan Version, and that even in the Hebrew Bible the name Jehovah is pointed with the vowel signs which belong to Adonai, another appellation of the Almighty, so as to avoid its utterance.

"It has always been a moot point how or when this pious horror of mentioning Jehovah's name was introduced; some contending that it dated with the earliest history of the Jews, and some

going so far as to say it was forbidden in the Levitical law by the expression, 'He that blasphemeth the name of Jehovah, he shall surely be put to death.' But this forced interpretation does not accord with the fact which we gather from the Old Testament, viz., that the heathen inhabitants of Canaan seem to have been acquainted with the name of Jehovah from the time of the Exodus. Thus Rahab declares her conviction to be that of her countrymen :—'I know that Jehovah hath given you the land. We have heard how Jehovah dried up the waters of the Red Sea for you.' And it is evident from the Moabite stone, that even in the days of Mesha that august name of the true God was so commonly pronounced by the Hebrews as to be familiar to their heathen neighbours, and commonly regarded by them as the characteristic name of the God of Israel. The mention therefore of Jehovah's name on this stone of Dibon three thousand years ago affords another incidental proof of the veracity of the Bible narrative, and helps us to fix the limits of time between which the curious custom of not pronouncing it sprang up. It must have been in the six hundred years that intervened between the days of Elisha and the formation of the Septuagint in the days of Ptolemy, that is, between 880 B.C.—285 B.C. When we remember the influences to which the Jews were exposed in the interval, and how among the heathen nations of antiquity

there was a reluctance to pronounce the name of certain deities (as we learn from the Vedas, from Herodotus and Plutarch), we can well understand how the Alexandrian Jews, who adopted so many philosophical ideas from their Greek neighbours, would first introduce it into the synagogues, and then into the Septuagint version, and thus eventually transplant the superstitious custom into Palestine itself."

XIX. "And the King of Israel fortified Jahaz and occupied it."

Aroused by the slaughters perpetrated by Mesha the king of Israel made an expedition against Moab from the northern side, and marching as far as Jahaz, between Medeba and Dibon, he took possession of the city. For some reason not explained the king of Israel would appear to have evacuated Jahaz and retired to his own land. Perhaps on getting to know of Mesha's prowess and the strength of the Moabites he concluded that to fight single-handed would only lead to defeat, or perhaps he heard of a threatened invasion of the Syrians.

Jahaz, called also Jahaza, Jahazah, and Jahzah, was an ancient town of Moab. Although said by some writers to be south of the Arnon, yet from Scripture it seems to have been north of that river, for as the Israelites were passing round the frontiers of Moab they received this command :—"Rise ye up, take

your journey and pass over the river Arnon ; behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon, the Amorite king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle. Then Sihon came out to fight against us, he and all his people to fight at *Jahaz*." Again in Numbers we read :—" Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel. And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon." At Jahaz, therefore, was fought the decisive battle in which Sihon, king of the Amorites, was completely routed, and his territory, the modern Belka of the Arabs, came into possession of the children of Israel. When it is remembered that the Israelites were journeying from the south and that they had passed over the Arnon before this battle was fought, it seems reasonable to conclude that Jahaz was north of that river.

Moses gave Jahaza to the tribe of Reuben, and the town subsequently was made one of the forty-eight Levitical cities. "To the children of Merari, son of Levi, was given Jahazah with her suburbs, and Bezer with her suburbs."

The town is mentioned in the denunciation of Isaiah against Moab. "Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh : their voice shall be heard even unto Jahaz." It occurs also in the denunciation of Jeremiah.

"Judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Mephaath." Eusebius says that Jahaz existed in his day, and was situated between Medeba and Dibon. In modern times it is mentioned by Schwartz, a German missionary, as occupying this position. Dr. Tristram says:—"There is a difficulty which seems to me insurmountable in trying to identify Jahaz with Shihan, a hill south of the Arnon, namely, that Jahaz was in the allotment of Reuben, and was one of the Levitical cities." Now few boundaries are more clearly laid down than that of the Arnon dividing Reuben from Moab. We can scarcely therefore suppose that a city south of the plateau was ever held by Israel. Eusebius places it between Medeba and Dibon, a more probable situation. All we can gather from Isaiah and Jeremiah is that Jahaz was in the 'Mishor' or highland plain.

XXI. "I BUILT KARCHAH," &c.

The great public works of Mesha, recorded in the latter part of the monument, show that Mesha was not only a valiant soldier, but that he was also an ardent patriot and wise statesman. "He appears at one time like an eagle pouncing on his prey; and at another like a lion stalking victoriously through the forest; he appears at another as a great engineer, constructing his ravelins around his citadels, and his roads and viaducts across the rugged passes of

the Arnon; or as a sanitary commissioner, constructing gigantic reservoirs and compelling every man to build a cistern in his own house. Now we have him engaged in foreign wars against his old enemies in Horonaim; now in repairing jails for the criminals, providing habitations for the paupers of his own dominion, and furthering objects for colonization. Here we have his midnight march against Nebo, and his furious onslaught against Ataroth. Again we have him repairing the walls of his cities, embellishing the structures of his palaces, and enlarging the boundaries of his preserves."

Remains of a Roman bridge are still extant, and fragments of arches are still standing; but the Romans only imitated here, and probably restored the old road and rebuilt the bridge where Mesha had first planned them.

XXVI. "I BUILT AROER, AND I MADE THE ROAD ACROSS THE ARNON."

Aroer was a town situated on the bank or by the brink of the torrent Arnon. The word *Aroer* is thought by some to mean ruins, although it is possibly connected with the present Arabic word *ar'ar*, a juniper tree. It is often mentioned in connection with the city, "in the river," or "in the midst of the river," and to distinguish it from other places of the same name, it is spoken of as Aroer "on the bank of the Arnon."

The town was the southern point of the territory of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and after the conquest of that monarch Aroer was allotted to the tribe of Reuben. In the time of Jeremiah it was again in the possession of the Moabites. Eusebius, in his "Onomasticon," describes Aroer as, "usque hodie in vertice montis super ripam (χειλος) torrentis Arnon."—"Even at the present day it is situated on the summit of a hill on the bank of the torrent of Arnon." This account exactly agrees with the account of Burckhardt, a Swiss traveller, who visited the spot in the beginning of this century. He found ruins on the old Roman road upon the very edge of the precipice on the north bank of the Wady Mojeb (vale of the Arnon), and these ruins still bear the name of Arâir. Dr. Tristram, in a recent visit to Aroer, says: "Before striking camp I went a little to the eastward to examine the ruins of Ara'-ar (Aroer), just overhanging the brow, and to take a good survey of the country. The ruins of Ara'ar are featureless, and I could find no traces of Roman temples, though several arches are still standing, and there are the usual number of wells and cisterns. Singularly appropriate is the denunciation on Aroer spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: 'O inhabitant of Aroer stand by the way, and espy; ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth, and say, What is done?'"

(26.) "AND I MADE THE ROAD ACROSS THE ARNON."

The river *Arnon*, now called Wady Mojeb, is a well-known stream flowing through the ancient land of Moab. Arnon is derived from a Hebrew word meaning to roar, so that Arnon signifies the roaring torrent, a meaning expressive of the tumultuous impetuosity of the stream during the rainy season. It rises in the Wilderness of Arabia in the mountains of Gilead, and after a circuitous course of about eighty miles empties its waters into the Dead Sea. The stream flows over a rocky bed, in a channel so deep and precipitous as to appear inaccessible. It formed the original boundary between the Amorites and Moabites, and the territory of the Amoritish kings, Sihon and Og, is frequently spoken of as extending from Mount Hermon to the River Arnon. The Israelites in their journey towards the Promised Land crossed the stream probably at the "fords of Arnon," spoken of by the prophet Isaiah: "As a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon." The passage taken by the Israelites was probably near Dibon-gad, and possibly at the same place where the valley is crossed at the present day, for the most frequented road taken by modern travellers crosses the ravine, winding its way among huge fragments of rock, not far from the ruins of Dhibân.

The Arnon formed the southern boundary of trans-Jordanic Palestine and the common frontier

between Reuben and Moab. On the borders of this stream Balak, king of Moab, met Balaam the false prophet; and not far from the Arnon was fought the decisive battle of Jahaz, wherein Sihon, king of the Amorites, was defeated and his kingdom came into possession of the Israelites. The banks in some places are very precipitous, and the summits of these banks are probably referred to as the high places of Arnon. Modern travellers say that the descent into the tremendous valley from the south side occupies an hour and a half, while that from the north occupies above half-an-hour. The Dimon of Isaiah is usually thought to be Dibon, and consequently the Arnon is by many identified with the waters of Dimon. Burckhardt, who visited this part in the beginning of the present century, declares that he never felt such suffocating heat as he experienced in this valley, from the concentrated rays of the sun and their reflection from the rocks. The stream is almost dried up in summer; but huge masses of rock torn from the banks and deposited high above the usual channel evince its fulness and impetuosity during the rainy season. Near Dibon the old Roman road comes down upon the stream, and here there remains a single high arch of a bridge, all the others having disappeared. Dr. Tristram, in his recent visit to Moab, says: "The ravine of the Arnon does not show till we are close upon it. . . . No idea of the rift can be formed till the very edge is reached. As far as we could

calculate by observation, the width of the valley is about three miles from crest to crest; the depth by our barometers 2,150 feet from the south side, which runs for some distance nearly 200 feet higher than the northen edge. The boulders have rolled down the slopes in wild fantastic confusion, and add much to the effect and grandeur of the southern bank. Though, indeed, not very difficult, except among the basaltic boulders, the path was not easily made out on the south side, even when upon it. Once it has been a chariot road, and as we descended the zigzag we frequently met with its traces, and the piers of the Roman (?) bridge at the bottom still stand in the stream. Steep as the descent looks, yet when in it it proves to be rather a rugged water-worn ravine than a precipitous cliff; three-quarters of an hour down we passed an old fort in ruins, with broken columns strewed about. A little above this was a broken Roman milestone, and two others lower down. Twenty minutes after this fort we passed another lower down, of larger size, with fragments of shafts, bases *in situ*, and many old foundations, some of them crossing the old Roman way, which here was very distinct. In other places what seemed to be the foundations of buildings must have been walls of masonry, built across the path, to prevent the torrents from washing away its material. In the steeper parts of the pass many piles of stones were heaped on the boulders, said by Burckhardt

to be provided as missiles for travellers in case of an attack; but more probably only placed there to guide him on the way, as we have noticed elsewhere. The arch of the bridge which Irby describes has now disappeared, and only the base is left. . . . After a bathe and a draught of the Arnon, we paused to enjoy the rich tropical vegetation and genial warmth of this great depth. Water never fails; the pools were full of fish, the dark green oleanders were budding for bloom. Above the Roman bridge are some faint remains of early buildings; perhaps 'the city that is in the midst of the river.' At least it is scarcely possible that such exuberant vegetation with perennial moisture should have remained unappropriated in the time of Israel's greatness; and whether the places so vaguely spoken of were above or below the fords, cities or villages there were sure to be in the midst of the river or wady."

XXVII. "I BUILT BETH-BAMOTH, FOR IT WAS DESTROYED."

Beth-Bamoth was probably the same place as the shorter form Bamoth, and also the same as Bamoth-baal. It seems to have been a sanctuary of Baal, in the country of Moab, and fell to the lot of Reuben, for "Joshua gave unto the tribe of Reuben, Heshbon, and all her cities that are in the plain; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baal-meon." It is mentioned in the itinerary of the Israelites:—"they

went from Bamoth in the valley, that is in the land of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh towards Jeshimon."

The word Bamoth when used as a common noun is rendered in our version as *high places*, thus :—"Balak took Balaam and brought him up into the *high places* of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people." "He is gone up to Bajith and to Dibon, the *high places*, to weep." In the catalogue of Moabite cities allotted to Reuben, as given in Joshua, it is mentioned in connection with Dibon and Beth-baal-meon; and hence it appears to have been situated near these towns, although the exact site of Bamoth is unknown. One writer thinks that Bomoth or Bamoth means an *altar* like the Greek βωμος, and that Beth-Bamoth means "the house of the altar or temple." Jeroboam made a Beth-Bomoth, translated an *house of high places*. Beth-Bamoth does not occur as a proper name in the Bible; and it is thought that had it been a Moabite town, it would have been mentioned by Jeremiah.

(27.) "I BUILT BEZER, FOR IT WAS CUT DOWN BY THE ARMED MEN OF DIBON, FOR ALL DIBON WAS NOW LOYAL."

Bezer in the wilderness is spoken of in the Septuagint as "βοσορ ἐν τῃ ἐρημῳ," and in the Vulgate as "Besor in solitudine." It is probably also the Bosor of the Maccabees, and was an ancient town north

of Moab, near the north bank of the Arnon, and a few miles west of Aroer. Bezer with its suburbs was allotted to the tribe of Reuben, and subsequently was made one of the three cities of refuge on the east of the Jordan.

XXIX. "AND I REIGNED FROM BIKRAN WHICH I ADDED TO MY LAND."

Bikran is not mentioned in the Bible; but it may be, as some writers have suggested, another name for "Bezer in the wilderness," the ruins of which are only a few miles west of Dibon.

XXX. "AND I BUILT BETH-DIBLATHAIM AND BETH-BAAL-MEON, AND I PLACED THERE THE POOR OF THE LAND."

Beth-diblathaim means the double house of figs, and is only once mentioned in Scripture. Jeremiah, in his denunciations against Moab, says:—"Judgment is come upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim." It is commonly thought, however, to be identical with Almon-diblathaim, one of the latest stations of the Israelites before they entered the Promised Land. They removed from Dibon-gad, and encamped in Almon-diblathaim; and they removed from Almon-diblathaim, and pitched in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. If Beth-diblathaim be the same as Almon-diblathaim, then from the above passage the situation of the town was somewhere between Dibon and Nebo.

XXXII. "AND AS TO HORONAIM, THE MEN OF EDOM DWELT THEREIN. . . . AND CHEMOSH SAID, GO DOWN, MAKE WAR AGAINST HORONAIM, AND TAKE IT."

Horonaim was a city of Moab, supposed to have been situated south of the Arnon. It seems to have been built upon an eminence, for Jeremiah says :—"In the going down of Horonaim, the enemies heard a cry," and was a place of importance. Isaiah foretold its destruction :—"for in the way of Horonaim, they shall raise up a cry of destruction," and Jeremiah utters denunciations against it. Sanballat, one of the chief accusers of the Jews in the time of Nehemiah, is called a Horonite, probably because he was a petty prince of Horonaim.

Mesha having driven out the Israelitish invaders, and made himself master of the whole land of Moab, from the Arnon northwards, now turned his attention, according to Chemosh's command, to an enemy in the south, who had occupied Horonaim. This enemy consisted of Edomites, probably under the command of an Edomite chieftain ; but Mesha having assaulted the place, was again crowned with success. With the mutilated history of this expedition, this invaluable inscription on the Moabite stone is brought to a conclusion.

Chapter VI.

THE LETTERS OF THE MOABITE STONE.

THE English alphabet is taken from the Roman, the Roman from the Greek, the Greek from the Phœnician, which is generally accounted to be the oldest alphabet in the world.

Previous to the use of letters, however, it is well known that the Egyptians expressed their thoughts by certain strange symbols, called hieroglyphics or sacred carvings, a name applied to this style of writing because it was almost exclusively applied to sacred subjects. Hieroglyphics were not letters properly so-called, but signs and figures of external objects, representing ideas and qualities of the mind : for instance, craftiness might be represented by the rude figure of a fox, rapidity by an eagle, purity by a dove, strength by a lion, and so on. We see, therefore, in this style that the pictorial characters were symbolical, just as they are at the

present time in Christian symbolism, wherein a fish stands for the Saviour, a dove for the Holy Spirit, &c. Not only had the Egyptians those symbolical hieroglyphics, but in process of time they invented a phonetic system of writing, wherein certain pictorial symbols stood for certain arbitrary sounds, and probably these phonetic hieroglyphics suggested the principle though not the figures of the first complete alphabet, generally acknowledged to be the work of the Phœnicians. That Phœnician writing is based upon that of Egypt seems clear, first from the testimony of Sanchoniatho, the sacred historian of Phœnicia, who affirms that the Phœnicians received their art of writing from Thoth, an ancient king of Egypt; secondly, from the testimony of Tacitus, an accurate as well as cautious writer, who says that the Phœnicians received the art of writing from the Egyptians.

The Phœnicians at one period were the greatest commercial people in the world, their ships sailed over every sea, and their commerce extended to all the civilized nations of the earth. Now in their commercial enterprise with the Egyptians it is highly probable that they became acquainted with the system of writing in use among that ancient people, and that the phonetic hieroglyphics suggested the principle of that alphabet, invented and perfected by the Phœnicians themselves. This alphabet was in course of time communicated to all the nations bordering on the Great Sea, and, in

fact, to all the people with whom they traded, so that by these nations the Phœnicians were accounted as the first inventors of phonetic writing. Monuments written in ancient Phœnician characters have been found also in Cyprus and Crete, Athens and Carthage, Malta and Gades.

The Hebrew alphabet was derived from the Phœnician, and although the exact period when this took place is a matter of great uncertainty, yet it must have occurred at a very early date, amid the dim ages of antiquity. Moses, we know, was skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians, and it has been suggested that on leaving Egypt he adopted the Phœnician alphabet, although this suggestion must be regarded as mere conjecture based upon no trustworthy authority. Rock inscriptions, of the nature of hieroglyphics, have been found inscribed on the rocks of Mount Sinai, and at first these were attributed to the children of Israel, and regarded as vestiges of their journeyings from Egypt to the Promised Land. These rock-cut inscriptions have lately been fully investigated, and shown to be in all probability a work posterior to the Christian era, and thus from their existence nothing can be proved with respect to the ancient literature of the Hebrews.

The first allusion to written characters among the Hebrews is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Exodus, where, in reference to the Amalekites, God said unto Moses, "*Write* this for a memorial

in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua." The Ten Commandments also were written, for we read, "Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were *written* on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." "And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest." "And He gave unto Moses two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."

From these passages it is abundantly clear that Moses understood the written characters, and that the Israelites, even if they understood not the letters, at least understood the language in which the writings were made. The giving of the Law, in round numbers, is about fifteen centuries B.C., so that the Hebrews must have learned the alphabet at a very early period indeed.

The letters of the Hebrew alphabet at first would be the same both in form and name as those of the Phœnicians, and it is known moreover that these primitive letters were generally used by the Israelites for the long period of one thousand years. The Phœnician alphabet was adopted and used, as we have seen, by many other nations, and all evidence tends to prove that in ancient times,

previous to the Babylonian captivity, the same system of written characters was used by all the people of Western Asia, including the nations who inhabited that vast region extending from Egypt to Assyria, and from the mountains of Taurus to the shores of the Indian Ocean. With respect to this alphabet, Professor Rawlinson says, "The term Phœnician, which has generally been applied to this class of writing, is not altogether a happy one, since there is no reason to believe that the character in question was at all peculiar to the Phœnician people. The character is found to have been in use at Nineveh itself, in Phœnicia, at Jerusalem, and Samaria, in the Moabite country, in Cilicia, and Cyprus." M. Deutsch has proposed to substitute for Phœnician, as the designation of this mode of writing, the term "Cadmæan."

Cadmus, the son of Agenor, the Phœnician king, is said by the Greeks to have first introduced from Phœnicia into Greece an alphabet of sixteen letters, to which four were added by Palamedes, at the time of the Trojan war, namely, Θ, Ξ, Φ, X. Simonides, a celebrated tragic poet of Greece who flourished about 500 B.C., is said to have invented other four letters, namely, Z, H, Ψ, Ω.

Alphabet.

In the primitive alphabet as seen on the Moabite stone, not only are the names of letters the names of common objects of rural and pastoral life, but

the letters are pictorial forms, that is, they are rude drawings of the objects themselves.

Aleph, the first letter, was also the common name for *ox;* but as it was a difficult matter to represent the whole of that animal, the inventors of letters contented themselves with making a rude representation of the head of that animal. The line cutting the other two probably represents the horns, or possibly the yoke that passed over the head of the ox. The letters take their names from well-known familiar objects, and in illustration we shall quote from the Bible a few allusions to the objects themselves. *Aleph* is only once used for *ox* in the Bible.

It should be remembered that though at first the letters were pictures of familiar objects, there was always a desire to simplify the characters; and this simplicity was attained by making fewer lines. In fact, early writers seem to aim at forming the letter without removing the hand from the paper; and this was done in order to write with greater rapidity, so that there is a gradual departure from the original figure, and the letters themselves become more and more of the nature of arbitrary signs.

It is interesting to notice the changes that *aleph* undergoes in the course of time, and to mark how in its transmission from the primitive form to the

Phœnician, and thence through archaic Greek, Greek and Roman, it gradually assumes its upright posture as it exists with us at the present time in our letter A.

Beth, the second letter, means a *house*, and although this figure seems to bear no resemblance to that object, yet it must be remembered that it would represent the abode of a pastoral people, namely, the simple tent of the shepherd. Originally the character would be a simple triangle; but as this form would easily be confounded with *daleth*, which was also a triangle, it would be necessary to distinguish these letters by making an appendage to one of them. This was effected by appending a tail to *beth*, which line therefore is only a diacritic mark. *Beth* is the only word for *house* in all passages of the Bible.

Gimel, the third letter, means a *camel;* but as it was difficult to make a drawing of the whole animal, it seems that the primitive form of the letter was a representation of the head and neck of that animal. In the two preceding letters the outward objects represented belong to pastoral life; while the camel belongs rather to commercial enterprise, and reminds us of the fact that the camel, the ship of the desert, was in ancient times what it now is and always has been, viz., the only means by which

the produce of other countries could be transported across the vast deserts of Africa, Arabia, and other eastern lands. *Gimel* of course becomes the Greek Gamma and English G. *Gimel* is the only word for *camel* in the Bible.

Daleth, the fourth letter, means a *door*, and although but a single triangle yet it faithfully portrays the door or entrance to a primitive tent, which in form would be the same as the tent itself; and probably therefore the side stroke of Beth was to distinguish it from this letter. *Daleth* is the Greek Delta, with which it is identical in shape, and our English D. Delta is still applied to the triangular piece of land situated between the mouths of a river. There are two words in the Bible denoting *door*, *daleth* being one.

He, the fifth letter, means a *lattice* or *window*. Lattice-work being applied to any piece of work composed of cross bars or rods, whether made of wood or iron, this letter may be a representation of the trellis-work often used in cultivating the vine, although lattice in its common acceptation is alluded to in the Bible.

"The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the *lattice*, Why is his chariot so long in coming?" "Ahaziah fell down through a *lattice* in his upper chamber, that was in Samaria." "My beloved looketh forth at the window, showing himself through the *lattice*."

This letter, which in sound is akin to our aspirate H, in form by the gradual elision of the tail becomes our English E. *He* is the only word for *lattice* in the Bible.

Vau, the sixth letter, means a *nail* or *peg*, and is probably a representation of the tent peg. In its earliest form the letter consists of a semicircle, from the middle of which a perpendicular line is depended. In course of time the vertical line became attached to one end of the semicircle. *Vau* is evidently the forerunner of the Greek Digamma, as well as the English letters V and F.

"Jael the wife of Heber took a *nail* of the tent. Sisera lay dead, and the *nail* was in his temples. I will fasten him as a *nail* in a sure place."

Gesenius gives *clavus*, a nail, as the true meaning of *Vau* equally with *uncus*, a hook; and indeed gives *clavus* the preference in his lexicon.

In reference to the existence of this letter on the Moabite stone, E. Deutsch says, "The *Vau* in this monument is distinctly the Greek Υ, another letter of supposed recent origin."

Vau is never used for *nail* in the Bible.

Zain, the seventh letter of the alphabet, according to some means an *olive tree*, according to others, an *arm* or *weapon*. In its primitive form as found on the stone, it bears no resemblance either to an olive tree or any

known weapon. It has been suggested that this letter in the square characters, now called Hebrew, somewhat resembles a bipennis, or double-edged battle-axe.

The existence of *zain* on the stone is of great paleographical importance, inasmuch as it has been argued that no such letter existed for hundreds of years after the date of the stone, and that Simonides first invented the letter, and called it Zeta, about 530 B.C. It is now clear, however, that *zain* formed one of the letters of the old Hebrew alphabet, and is the ancestor of the Greek Zeta and English Z.

Heth, the eighth letter, means a *field* or enclosed space, of which it is in the earliest shape an accurate representation. In later times the letter is formed by fewer strokes, and there is consequently a slight departure from the truth of the original picture. Among the grassy hills and fertile plains, where numerous flocks were feeding, enclosed spaces would be necessary to prevent the sheep from straying and mixing with those of other flocks. Hence in very early times there is frequent reference to such enclosures. "The cave of Machpelah in the end of his *field*." "I will give thee money for the *field*." "And it came to pass, when Cain and Abel were in the *field*." "In the *field* which Abraham bought." "Isaac went out to

meditate in the *field* at the eventide." "Jacob called Rachel and Leah to the *field*." "Behold, Joseph was wandering in the *field*."

Heth is never used for *field* in the Bible.

Teth, the ninth letter of the ancient Hebrew and Phœnician, unfortunately is not found on the Moabite stone. In reference to this omission, Professor Rawlinson says :— "The *teth* is the letter omitted. It was rare in Phœnician and not very common in Hebrew. There is no specimen of it on the Assyrian tablets or gems, and if I remember right, only one in the inscription of Eshmunazar, king of Sidon. A recent conjecture of M. Ganneau's would make the *teth* have occurred in one passage of the inscription of Mesha; but the form is unfortunately irrecoverable." Dr. Ginsburg says :— "It is greatly to be deplored that the *Teth* has disappeared from the text, yet there can hardly be any doubt that it did originally occur on the stone in the word Ataroth in line 11 of the Inscription. We are perplexed to understand what Professor Rawlinson means by his remark that '*Teth* is not very common in Hebrew,' seeing that it occurs 11,052 times in the Hebrew Scriptures."

Teth means a *snake*, and the letter gradually assumes the form of the Greek Θ, to which *teth* is equivalent. A ring is often a representation of a

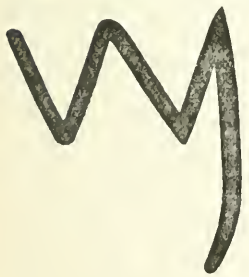
snake or serpent coiled round with the tail in its mouth, so as to form a complete circle.

Yod, the tenth letter of the primitive alphabet, means a *hand*, and is in its earliest known form as here represented. As depicted on the stone it is composed of four lines, and probably represents the hand and wrist in profile. Of the horizontal lines, the highest is the forefinger, the middle the thumb, the lowest the wrist, and the long vertical line the palm. In course of time the horizontal lines gradually diminish in size, while the fourth assumes a direct vertical position, and remains the sole representative of the letter, and our English I. In late forms *yod*, the parent of the Greek Iota, is the smallest and simplest form of letter ; hence *yod* or *iota* came to stand for anything small, insignificant, or worthless, as in the phrase :—" I care not a jot," or " I care not one iota." *Yod* is the only word used for *hand* in the Bible.

Kaph, the eleventh letter, means a *hollow*, and is generally applied to the hollow of the hand or foot. According to Professor Rawlinson, *kaph* is properly the hollow hand, the *vola* of the Romans. In the early character the long stroke represents the fore-arm. This long line diminishes in length, and the letter becomes our English K, which is equivalent to *kaph*

both in form and sound :—"The angel touched the *hollow* of Jacob's thigh." *Kaph* is the word commonly used in the Bible to denote the *hollow* of the hand and foot.

Lamed, the twelfth letter, means an *ox-goad* or *prick-stick*. It was originally pointed at one end, while it was curved into a handle at the other. Gradually the sharp point was lost, and the handle became angular, thus assuming the form of our English L. *Lamed* never occurs as a word in the Bible.

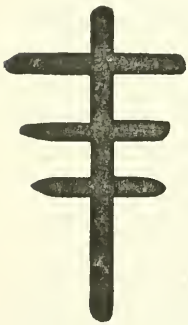


Mem, the thirteenth letter, means *water*, and the wavy line by which it is represented probably indicates the surface of water when disturbed. The Assyrians almost invariably represent water on their sculptures by a waved line. "The spirit of God moved upon the *waters*." "Let the firmament divide the *waters* from the *waters*." "Aaron stretched out his hand over the *waters*." "He weigheth the *waters* by measure." "The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee." "Blessed are ye that sow beside all *waters*." The long arm of the letter, which is possibly a diacritic mark, gradually becomes shorter, and assumes the form of the Greek Mu and our English M. It is only in the primitive Phœnician

that we find the angular or zigzag form. *Mem* is the only word used for *water* in the Bible.

Nun, the fourteenth letter, means a *fish*, and is one of the few letters that does not undergo any great change of form. It is, of course, the ancestor of the Greek Nu and our English N. It ought to be noticed that *nun*, a *fish*, is in juxtaposition with *mem*, *water;* just as in the original objects the living fish must needs be in its vital element, water.

Nun is never used for *fish* in the Bible.



Samech, the fifteenth letter, means a *prop*, and probably the original figure not only depicted the upright line, the *prop* proper, but also the horizontal bars, which probably stand for the trellis-work on which the vines were trained.

The discovery of *samech* on the stone, a letter which is the undoubted forerunner of the Greek Xi, is of the highest importance, inasmuch as it has been contended that Simonides invented the Greek Xi about the year 530 B.C.

Professor Rawlinson says:—"The correspondency of the Greek Xi with the Phœnician *samech*, whose place it occupies in the alphabet, had long been suspected; but the absolute identity of the two was first proved by our stone, which uses for

samech the exact form, a perpendicular line crossed by three vertical bars, found to express Xi, where it first occurs in Greek inscriptions. As this form was superseded by a simpler one before the period of the Assyrian tablets and gems, we have here, again, an evidence favouring an early passage of the Phœnician letters into Greece.

Samech being the Greek Xi is consequently the earliest form of our English X.

Ain, the sixteenth letter, means an *eye*, and both in early and late forms the letter preserves the form of an eye, or, perhaps, more correctly, the pupil and iris of that organ. It became the Greek Omicron and English O; although it evidently occurs on the stone as equivalent to final short A and other letters.

Ain, in course of time, was also applied to a *fountain* of water, and it is easy to understand how a bright eye suggested the idea of a sparkling fountain bubbling forth amid the sands of the desert.

"He kept him as the apple of his *eye*." "His *eye* was not dim, nor his force abated." "His *eye* seeth every precious thing." "The *eye* of the Lord is on them that fear Him." "The law of the Lord is a *fountain* of life." "For with Thee is the *fountain* of Life." "Oh that mine eyes were a *fountain* of tears." "In that day a *fountain* shall be opened."

Ain is the only word used for *fountain* in the Bible.

Pe, the seventeenth letter of the alphabet, means a *mouth*, and, as will be seen from the illustration, has an angular top on the stone, although in later times the top assumes a curved form and gradually through the Greek Pi becomes our English P.

Pe and *ain*, immediately preceding it, are in juxtaposition just as the outward objects they represent are organs of the body situated near to each other. Probably the *eye* and *mouth* of the human face suggested the use of these two letters.

"Lo in her *mouth* was an olive-leaf." "The Lord said, Who hath made man's *mouth?*" "The *mouth* of the righteous speaketh wisdom." "The *mouth* of the foolish is near destruction, but the *mouth* of the just bringeth forth wisdom." *Pe* is the only word used for *mouth* in the Bible.

Tsaddi, the eighteenth letter, means a *fish-spear*, and somewhat resembles a trident, although the desire to write rapidly has even at a very early period caused a considerable departure from the original representation. The sound of *tsaddi* is equal to ts or tz, and approaches therefore the sound of the Greek Zeta and English Z, although the exact sound is not represented either in Greek

or English by any one letter. The word *tsaddi* does not seem to be used in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Koph, the nineteenth letter, means the *hole of an axe* according to Gesenius, the *back of the head* according to some paleographists, and the *eye of a needle* according to Professor Rawlinson. It will be observed that the top part of this letter is a circle, to the bottom of which is appended a vertical bar.

In the Assyrian tablets and gems the circle in *koph* is invariably formed by two semicircular strokes, and probably it was thus formed in the original letter also.

The existence of *koph* on the stone is of great paleographical importance, for it is manifestly the Greek Koppa and the Latin Q. In the earliest form the vertical bar does not always penetrate the eye, although as early as 745 B.C., in the time of Tiglath-pileser, the vertical line had been lengthened and continued to the top of the circle. If *koph* means the eye of a needle, which it probably does, then as the circle is small in proportion to the length of the vertical bar in the earliest form, as the eye of even a rude needle would be—the form of this letter on the Moabite stone must be pronounced to be a much better representation of the eye of a needle than later forms of this letter.

If *koph* means the eye of a needle, then the fact that this object was chosen as the type of a letter points to a certain amount of progress in needlework; and although *koph*, meaning the eye of a needle, seems nowhere to be used in Scripture, yet we know that needlework and embroidery are often spoken of. "An hanging wrought with *needlework*." "Thou shalt make the girdle of *needlework*." "A prey of divers colours of *needlework*." "She shall be brought in raiment of *needlework*." *Koph* does not appear to be used as a word in the Bible.

Resh, the twentieth letter, means a *head*, although the likeness to a head does not appear in this primitive form. From *resh* comes the Greek Rho and English R. *Ras*, evidently another form of *resh*, is the present Arabic word for *head*. It seems to be the only word used for *head* in the Hebrew Scriptures. "It shall bruise thy *head*." "The consecration of his God is on his *head*." "The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her *head* at thee." "Thou art my glory and the lifter up of my *head*." "Blessings are on the *head* of the just."

Schin, the twenty-first letter, means a *tooth*, and probably represents a molar with its fangs. By being gradually turned on to its side, *schin* becomes the

Greek Sigma, Σ, and English S. "A *tooth* for a *tooth*." "If he smite out his servant's *tooth*, he shall let him go free for his *tooth's* sake." "Is like a broken tooth." *Schin* is the only word for *tooth* in the Bible.

The twenty-second and last letter of the Phœnician and Hebrew alphabet means *brand* or *mark*, and probably refers to the mark on the back of their sheep and cattle by means of which the flocks belonging to various shepherds could readily be distinguished. *Tau* gradually assumes the form of the Greek Tau and our English T. "Set a *mark* on the men that sigh and cry." "Come not near any man on whom is the *mark*." There are four Hebrew words used to denote a *brand* or *mark* in the Bible, but *Tau* is only once used for *mark*, namely, in Ezek. ix. 4.

Chapter VII.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE INSCRIPTION.

THE language in which the inscription is written is almost identical with the Hebrew, and this fact shows that the Moabites and Hebrews originally spoke the same language, as might be expected when it is remembered that these nations were by descent closely allied to each other. Indeed, the Moabite language is evidently the same as Hebrew, with the exception of a few variations of Arabic origin, the result of the contact and intercourse of the Moabites with the nomadic Arabs adjoining their territory.

Joseph in Egypt spoke to his brethren through an interpreter, which shows that the Egyptian language differed from the Hebrew. Hezekiah also communicated with the Babylonians by means of interpreters, but we never read of interpreters in the frequent intercourse of the Israelites with the

Moabites, and this triumphal tablet of Dibon clearly shows what the Sacred Volume always implied to be the case, namely, that those two nations spoke one and the same language.

With regard to the language of the Jews, it may be well in this place to remark that there has existed, and still does exist, a prevalent idea that the Hebrew language, in which God was pleased to make known the revelation of His will, was always confined within very narrow limits; so that just as in ancient times God made the Jews a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, so the language in which the sacred oracles committed to them were written was confined exclusively to the Jewish people.

This opinion is clearly erroneous, for an investigation of the relation of Shemitic languages shows clearly that what is denominated the Phœnician language was essentially identical with the Hebrew. This identity is proved from the fact that all the names of persons and places in the land of Canaan are pure Hebrew, and it ought to be remembered that the Phœnicians were but a tribe of the Canaanitish nations, speaking, of course, the same language. The identity of Phœnician and Hebrew is seen as early as the days of Abraham, for Abimelech, Melchisedek, &c., are pure Hebrew names; and subsequently when the Israelites took possession of Canaan, the names of cities and districts were all pure Hebrew, and the same remark applies also to Phœnician cities, as Tyre, Sidon, &c.

This fact is further corroborated by numerous inscriptions on Phœnician coins, collected and published in "Monumenta Phœnicia," an interesting volume, written about fifty years ago by Gesenius, a German theologian and distinguished oriental scholar. We know that the Phœnicians were the foremost in commerce among the nations of antiquity; and this wide-spread commerce was undoubtedly the means of diffusing their language over many lands. Before the days of Xerxes, international communication by sea was almost exclusively carried on by the Phœnicians, and thus their language was imported among all the people living on the shores of the Great Sea. Consequently coins with inscriptions in the Phœnician tongue have been found in Greece and Carthage, in Cyprus and Crete, in Malta and Spain.

How far the diffusion of the Phœnician language might have been accompanied by a knowledge of the written revelation of God we know not; one thing is certain, that it thus became possible; and this may be coupled with the facts that seeming traces were found among many nations of Scripture truths, and the Jews and early Christians alike ascribed this to knowledge borrowed in some manner from the Old Testament Scriptures, prior to the version of the Septuagint. The Phœnician tongue belonged to the Shemitic languages, which formed a large family, spoken in Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Phœnicia, Palestine, and Arabia.

It follows, therefore, that the Shemitic languages were spoken in all the countries extending from the Great Sea to the borders of the Assyrian Empire, and from the mountains of Armenia to the shores of the Indian Ocean.

These languages are divided into three branches. First, the Aramaic, or northern branch, including the Syriac spoken in Syria, and Chaldaic spoken in Mesopotamia and Babylonia. Aram, literally high region, is a name sometimes applied to Syria, sometimes to Mesopotamia, and in its widest sense to both these regions. Chaldaic, although usually applied to West Aramaic, strictly denotes the ancient language of the Chaldeans, which continued to be the court language of Babylonia even in the days of Daniel. The second branch, called also the middle division of Shemitic languages, includes Phœnician and Hebrew together with the Samaritan dialect. The third branch, or southern division, includes the Arabic and Himiaritic, a dialect spoken in the south part of Arabia.

Two-thirds of the Old Testament is written in old Hebrew, the language spoken by the Jews from the time of Moses until the Babylonian captivity, and which we have remarked to be almost identical with the Phœnician and Moabitish tongues.

The old Hebrew, or sacred language of the Jews, was gradually displaced and superseded by the Aramaic. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, after leading the ten tribes away into captivity in 721 B.C.

placed colonists of Syrian origin in Samaria and the neighbourhood. These colonists gradually framed a language, partly Hebrew and partly Syriac, a language which subsequently was known as the Samaritan. During the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity, the Jews partly forgot their own sacred language, and acquired the Chaldaic, or East Aramaic, spoken in Mesopotamia and Babylonia. Thus must the Babylonian captivity be accounted the chief cause of the change of tongue ; for there can be no doubt that the gradual introduction of the Aramaic hastened the decline of the old Hebrew tongue. Subsequently, Palestine became part of the Syrian kingdom, and then the Hebrew received a final blow, yielding completely to the Aramaic, which became the language of conversation and writing. This Aramaic tongue was the popular language of the Jews in the time of our Saviour, and although in New Testament-times it is sometimes called Hebrew, yet it is manifestly not the same as the old Hebrew, or sacred language of the Jewish nation. Some portions of the Old Testament are written in the Chaldaic, or East Aramaic language, including three chapters of Ezra, six chapters of Daniel, and one verse in Jeremiah. Translations of portions of the sacred writings were frequently made from Hebrew into Chaldaic, these translations being called Targums, from a Chaldaic verb, meaning, to translate.

With regard to Shemitic languages, it is to be

noticed that the mode of writing is from right to left, and that the letters proper are strictly consonants, although some of these consonants occasionally represent vowel sounds. The oldest written works are in Hebrew, some portions of Aramaic are found in Ezra, Daniel, and Jeremiah, but the earliest Arabic inscriptions are after the Christian era.

Chapter VIII.

THE DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION.

THE inscription on this ancient relic records the wars and triumphs of Mesha, king of Moab, in his struggle with Omri and Ahab, the kings of Israel, for the independence of his country; and there now exists no doubt but that the Mesha who erected this triumphal tablet is the same Mesha as that warrior-king who fought so valiantly against Israel, as recorded in 2 Book of Kings, and who, when driven at bay within the fortress of Kir-hareseth, mounted the wall of the stronghold and offered up his eldest son as a burnt-offering to propitiate the ruthless fire-god Chemosh.

This stone, therefore, carries us back almost to the time when David, the poet-king, composed the Book of Psalms, and Solomon erected his magnificent temple. The inscription was carved about 900 B.C., and therefore brings us face to face with

the days of Omri and Asa, Ahab and Jezebel, Jehoram and Jehoshaphat, Elijah and Elisha. "We have the identical slab on which the workmen of the old world carved the history of their own times, and from which the eyes of their contemporaries read, thousands of years ago, the record of events of which they themselves had been the witnesses."

It ought also to be remembered, not only that this inscription throws great light upon the Sacred Volume, but also that this inscription is the work of one who was the avowed enemy of God and His chosen people.

Respecting its antiquity and importance, Count de Vogüé says :—"I venture to say that there does not exist in the domain of Hebrew antiquities a document which can be compared with it. It is the only authentic and original Biblical monument found up to the present time." Mr. Grove thinks that the stone is the first genuine fragment of the literature of the Moabites outside the Bible that has been encountered, and that the inscription clearly shows the nation of Moab to have been more civilized and important than is generally supposed. Deutsch says that the stone is unquestionably the oldest Shemitic lapidary record of importance as yet discovered, that its historical and linguistic importance is startlingly obvious, that its gain to paleography and Shemitic science is immense. The most ancient inscriptions written

in alphabetic characters are :—First, a long Phœnician inscription on the sarcophagus of Eshmun-azar, king of Sidon, which is now in the Louvre, Paris, and is supposed to date about 600 B.C. Secondly, inscriptions which appear upon certain Assyrian tablets and coins, dating 750-650 B.C. Thirdly, the inscription on the Moabite stone belongs to about 900 B.C., and therefore is a century and a half older than any other alphabetic record, thus bringing us nearer to the fount and origin of our alphabet than any other document extant.

With regard to the particular date of the inscription, the learned are not agreed ; some contending that the triumphal monolith was erected during the reign of Ahaziah, and previous to the expedition of the then allied armies against Kir-hareseth ; while the majority say that it was erected after this expedition, in the reign of Jehoram, king of Israel. Count de Vogüé, in a letter published in the " Times " of 22nd February, 1870, says :—" The only period in this tragic history in which the successful campaign mentioned on the pillar of Dibon can be placed appears to me to be that of the first revolt of Mesha. . . Victorious at Jahaz and Dibon, he erected the pillar as a monument of his victory ; then, emboldened by success, he undertook against the king of Judah the campaign which was to have so gloomy an end. If my conjectures are well founded, the pillar was

engraved in the second year of the reign of Ahaziah, king of Israel, that is, following the chronology generally adopted, the year 896 before the Christian era."

It is urged that the inscription must have been written before the siege of Kir-hareseth, because there is no allusion on the stone either to the expedition itself, or to the horrible deed perpetrated by Mesha on the walls of the fortress.

The sacred records acquaint us with the fact, that during the reigns of Omri and Ahab an enormous tribute was wrung from the tributary kingdom of Moab. Ahab was routed and slain by the Syrians at Ramoth Gilead, and this was the signal for Mesha, the king of Moab, to throw off the yoke of allegiance and seek the deliverance of his country from grinding oppression. Accordingly he raised the standard of revolt, and fought for the independence of his kingdom. The Bible thus clearly states the causes of the revolt, while the Triumphal Tablet records the successes of the struggle and the issue of the war. Thus does perfect harmony exist between the stone and the Bible, while the two records also supplement and illustrate each other. Soon after the declaration of war, bands of Moabites appear to have invaded Judah, and came to Engedi against Jehoshaphat to battle. The king of Judah prayed and committed himself and his army to the care of the God of his fathers. God heard the prayer of his faithful servant, and the

prophet Jahaziel was directed to foretell victory to the Jews:—"Ye need not to fight in this battle, for the battle is not your's, but God's ..... And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that they should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten .... And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the Lord: therefore the name of the same place

was called, the valley of Berachah (that is, blessing), unto this day." Dr. Kitto and Dr. Ginsburg place the date of this expedition after the siege of Kir-hareseth, a supposition which does not appear to harmonize with the chronology of events; for it seems from 2 Chron. xx., where this battle is recorded, that the victory at Engedi was in the reign of Ahaziah, and we read in the last part of the same chapter, "And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly:" thus making the alliance between these monarchs subsequent to the campaign related above.

The siege of Kir-hareseth was assuredly during the reign of Jehoram, the successor of Ahaziah, and, therefore, after the victory obtained by Jehoshaphat at Engedi. It is evident from the Bible that Jehoram, when planning an expedition against Moab to quell the insurrection against his supremacy over that land, regarded king Mesha as a very formidable enemy, and, accordingly, sought the assistance and co-operation both of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and that of the king of Edom. The result of that triple alliance has been already narrated, but the account of the campaign is brought to a somewhat abrupt conclusion in these words: "Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed

from him, and returned to their own land." Does this language imply that Mesha was vanquished, or that the siege was raised, and the invaders returned to their respective homes without effecting the subjugation of Moab? As far as the words themselves are concerned either supposition might be correct, although the weight of evidence favours the latter interpretation. The ancients felt a difficulty in commenting upon the passage, and Josephus thus describes the termination of the campaign :—"The king of Moab when he was pursued endured a siege, and seeing his city in danger of being overthrown by a force, made a sally and went out with seven hundred men, in order, through the enemy's camp, with his horsemen, on that side where the watch seemed to have been kept most negligently ; and when upon trial he could not get away, for he lighted upon a place that was carefully watched, he returned into the city, and did a thing that showed despair and the utmost distress, for he took his eldest son that was to reign after him, and lifting him up upon the wall, that he might be visible to all the enemies, he offered him up as a whole burnt offering to his God, whom when the kings saw they commiserated the distress that was the occasion of it, and were so affected, in the way of humanity and pity, that they raised the siege and every one returned to his own household."

Commenting on this passage, Dr. Ginsburg thinks

"it requires no argument to show that this conversion of the anger manifested by the Moabites into humanity and pity shown by the allied armies, is simply a subterfuge to get over the difficulty in admitting that the Jews were beaten back, and compelled to retire after the sacrifice made by Mesha. It is that fact, so euphemistically expressed in 2 Kings by the defeated, which is so emphatically described and celebrated in this inscription by the victor. That the Moabites, who suffered so bitterly at first, should at the end gain the victory, will not surprise anyone who carefully peruses the biblical account of this invasion by the allies. The fact that the king of Israel was afraid to undertake the expedition alone, and that he not only solicited the aid of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, but also the co-operation of the king of Edom, and that even those three kings, who in person commanded the allied armies, thought it more prudent and safe to resort to stratagem, and make a circuitous route of seven days rather than confront the Moabite army in a straightforward invasion, shows beyond doubt that the Moabites were most powerful, that the invaders knew it perfectly well, and that the change in the fortunes of war in favour of the invaded was perfectly natural."

It is probable that Mesha, having offered up his son, and thinking that by this propitiatory sacrifice he had appeased Chemosh, and made him to look again with favour upon his people, was stirred up

to deeds of daring; and that the beleaguered army, inflamed with a storm of anger against the enemy—for "there was great indignation against Israel"—was nerved to desperate action, and rushing with vehemence on the foe, caused the three kings with their armies to flee before them.

"They departed from him, and returned to their own land," appears to imply that the invaders evacuated the land, and that Mesha, by a series of brilliant victories, was enabled to achieve the independence of his country, and establish himself as the sovereign ruler of his kingdom. The inscription makes no allusion to the siege of Kir-hareseth, neither does it hint at the horrible sacrifice made for the sake of vanquishing the foe; but this is not to be wondered at when we remember that this triumphal stone was set up in commemoration of *victories*, and it is not to be expected that in this proud vaunting inscription there would be an account of reverses suffered in the campaign.

Kings do not set up monuments to commemorate disasters or recall to mind acts of humiliation, and perhaps it would be as reasonable to look for allusions to reverses of the British navy in the proud strains of "Britannia Rules the Waves," as to expect a reference to Mesha's disasters in the vaunting inscription of this triumphal stone. This monolith was erected when the invaders were driven out of the country, when public edifices were finished, and the independence of Moab was established on

a firm basis. In the fourth verse of the inscription there seems to be an allusion not simply to the king of Israel but to the armies of the three allied kings: "Chemosh saved me from *all* despoilers, and let me see my desire upon *all* my enemies." From the seventh verse we learn that Medeba had been possessed by Omri and his descendants for forty years; reckoning, therefore, from the accession of Omri in 929 B.C. the space of forty years brings us to the sixth of Jehoram's reign, and, according to this reckoning, the stone was set up about the year 890 B.C.

Chapter IX.

THE SHAPE OF THE STONE.

THERE still exists a difference of opinion respecting the shape of the stone. It will be remembered that according to Ganneau, it was rounded at the top and square at the bottom. The Palestine Exploration Fund a short time ago made a present of the eighteen small fragments to the French, in order that the latter, having possession of all the fragments hitherto recovered, might be able to reconstruct the stone, and set it up in some public place in France. This reconstruction has accordingly been effected, and the Moabite stone is now set up in the Louvre, Paris. A facsimile has also been set up in Kensington Museum, where it may now be seen. The French *savants*, following Ganneau's description, have made it square at the bottom, so that the stone stands up like an ordinary tombstone. On the other hand the Rev. F. Klein, in

his well-known letter published in the "Pall Mall Gazette" of 19th April, 1870, expressly states, "that the stone is rounded on *both* sides, not only at the upper end; as in the upper part so also in the lower, in exactly the same way the lines become smaller by degrees. The stone itself was in a most perfect state of preservation, not one single piece being broken off." This description was accompanied by a sketch, which may now be seen in the office of the Palestine Exploration Fund. It ought to be observed that many details given in M. Ganneau's memoir have not been verified; *e.g.*, the thickness of the stone does not seem to equal its breadth. Klein says the thickness is half the breadth, and this measurement has been adopted in the restoration. Secondly, Ganneau says there appeared a kind of border or framework on the left side of the monument but not on the right. According to Klein's sketch there is a border on both sides, and in like manner the border appears in the restoration. Thirdly, Ganneau's startling remark that "all the words are separated by dots, and the text is divided into verses by vertical lines," although correct generally speaking, is not true in every case.

Moreover, when it is remembered that M. Ganneau never saw the entire stone, while the Rev. F. Klein was the only European who ever gazed upon the precious relic as it lay amid the ruins of Dhibân, and actually made a sketch of it on the spot, it

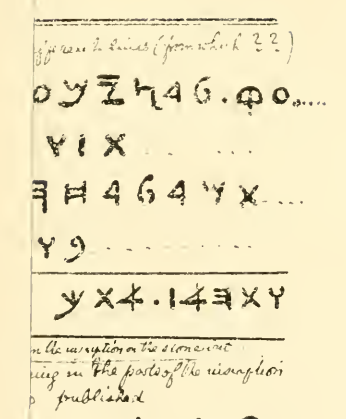
appears to us at least, that the weight of evidence favours the shape as stated by the Rev. F. Klein; and therefore we regret that the French *savants* in the restoration have adopted M. Ganneau's account.

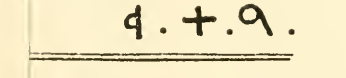
The exact shape of the stone is of great importance, because if it stood upright on the ground like a tombstone, then probably the stone itself is the sanctuary referred to in the inscription. If on the other hand it was rounded at the bottom as at the top, then it seems probable that the stone was only the inscribed tablet of some larger building, which may have been an altar, pillar, or temple.

We endorse the opinion of Mr. Alexander Forbes, who says:—"The stone discovered at Dibon, one of the chief cities of ancient Moab, is evidently, from its shape and the smallness of its dimensions, but part of a larger monument, whether pillar, altar, or temple. It is the tablet bearing the inscription showing why and by whom the larger building was erected. What the nature of that building was we learn from the third line of the inscription, where it is said 'I made this *high place* (Bomoth) for Chemosh.' Bomoth, Greek βωμος, is, according to Rosenmüller, a plural noun used as a singular, signifying a high place. It was probably a sacrificial altar, and the one with which we have to do was dedicated to Chemosh, the god of Moab, by Mesha, the

king of that people, in acknowledgment of the victories his god had enabled him to achieve over Israel, and over Jehovah, their god. It was doubtless a splendid and conspicuous monument, worthy of a king who tells us that he was a great builder, of the god to whom it was dedicated, and of the great national deliverance which he commemorated. As such it would be well known to neighbouring nations, more especially to the people of Judæa; and accordingly we find Isaiah speaking according to the Septuagint of Δηβων οὖ ὁ βωμος ὑμῶν, Dibon, where is your high place; (bomos), *i. e.*, your chief, or your well-known high place. It is through their monarchs and public monuments that nations speak to the world; and this was more particularly the case in ancient times, when there was no means of publication, such as that of our modern gazettes." We are, therefore, warranted in considering the inscription on the stone, the tablet of the great national monument, as an utterance of the whole people of Moab, and we shall find from an examination of the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Isaiah, and the forty-eighth of Jeremiah, that this very inscription, which has been so wonderfully brought to light in these latter days, was both well known to those prophets, and was considered by them to be a national utterance on the part of the people of Moab, and was replied to by them as such. If we are right in supposing

that Isaiah and Jeremiah had this national utterance in view in their prophecies concerning Moab, we may expect to find some notice, some rebuke of the exceeding boastfulness of the inscription, and we do so. Isaiah says:—"We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud: even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath: but his lies shall not be so." Jeremiah says:—"We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart. I know his wrath, saith the Lord; but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it." What appears to us to have led to much misconception about this inscription is, that *bomoth* has been translated *stone*. In some translations Mesha is made to say, "I erected this stone," which conveys to the mind the idea of a stone like those of Stonehenge, or one of those standing stones which are stuck into the ground. But the fact that the stone is covered to the very bottom by the inscription, and that it is rounded at all its corners, shows that this could not have been the case, while those two circumstances as forcibly point out that it was a tablet inserted in a larger building, which building was a βμως. A βμως was an altar, as we learn from the Septuagint version of Numbers xxii. 2, "And he offered a bullock and a ram επι του βωμου (upon the altar)."





Sketch of a basaltic stone with Moabite Inscription
discovered by me among the ruins of Dibân (ancient Dibon)
on the 19th of August 1868.

F. A. Klein.
Colonel Missionary of Jerusalem

wOYZH46.Φo....
.. YIX
1. ЭH4G4YX.
Ŧ 9Y9
YX4.14ЭXY

(read) as from the right hand to the corner
(letters) not occurring in the parts of the inscription
hitherto published

9.+.9.

Copied from the original Drawing, by permission of the Palestine Exploration Fund

Chapter X.

THE BIBLE VINDICATED BY THE LETTERS, HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, AND TEACHING OF THE STONE.

THE inscription on the Moabite stone throws light upon the number of letters in that ancient alphabet from which the Greek, Roman, English, and other alphabets of modern European nations were derived.

Herodotus states that Cadmus first brought letters from Phœnicia to Greece, but that historian says nothing respecting the number. Pliny, however, says that the alphabet brought by Cadmus contained only sixteen letters, and that eight letters were subsequently invented by the Greeks, and therefore must be accounted of Greek and not Phœnician origin, namely, the four letters Θ, Ξ, Φ, X, invented by Palamedes; and afterwards other

four, Z, H, Ψ, Ω, by Simonides, the lyric poet, about 530 B.C. Hence Dr. Donaldson and other learned men came to the conclusion that "the original Shemitic alphabet contained only sixteen letters."

Mr. Grote and many other scholars believed that the original alphabet was introduced into Greece about the period of the first Olympiad, 776 B.C. On the other hand, divines and other scholars who believe in the genuineness and inspiration of the Old Testament contended that the ancient alphabet before the period of the Olympiads contained twenty-two letters; and the evidence adduced in favour of this was that many passages in the Bible professing to belong to a period about a thousand years before the Christian era contained twenty-two and not merely sixteen letters. The following passages—Psalms xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii., cxi., cxii., cxix., cxlv., Prov. xxxi. 10-31, Lament. i.-iv., bring out into bold relief twenty-two letters. Each of those passages is written in the form of an alphabetical acrostic; consequently in those poetical compositions each verse, period, or stanza in its initial letter follows the order of the alphabet, and as the alphabet exhibited in each place contained the same number and order of characters, it has very reasonably been contended that the ancient alphabet used by Hebrew writers had twenty-two letters, as at present.

Before the discovery of the Moabite stone these passages were the only evidence that could be

adduced in favour of this number ; but this evidence was of course controverted. Palæographists urged that there were but sixteen letters in the Cadmean alphabet, and cavillers at God's Word gladly fixed upon this testimony, and with great daring asserted that all these passages had no claim to Divine authority, inasmuch as the number of letters they contained clearly proved them to be the spurious compositions of impostors, who lived many centuries after the time such passages professed to be written. What says our venerable witness, the patriarchal stone of Moab? It presents us with an alphabet claiming an age at least 900 years before Christ. Indeed, as the age of the stone itself is about 900 B.C., and as no rational being can maintain that its characters were invented for the first time for the sake of this inscription, it follows that they must have been used by Eastern nations long before this remote period.

The stone presents us, moreover, with an alphabet not of sixteen letters, as had been vainly urged, but with twenty-two letters, the very letters which had always been claimed by divines on the authority of the old Hebrew Bible. Not only do we find on this triumphal tablet the four letters, Z, H, Θ, Σ, said to have been of Greek origin and unknown to Shemitic nations, but also the Koppa of the archaic Greek. The stone, therefore, like a venerable prophet, vindicates the Word of God, and puts to flight the army of cavillers ; it testifies to the antiquity

and claims of the grand Old Book which captious disputants and would-be philosophers had dared to impugn.

The present square Hebrew characters are not by any means as old as the primitive letters found on the patriarchal stone; and it is generally believed by eminent scholars that the square forms are really Chaldean in their origin, and were acquired by the Jews during the seventy years' captivity in Babylonia. They bear some resemblance to letters found on the inscriptions at Palmyra in the desert; while some letters found on the coins of the Maccabean princes closely resemble those on the Moabite stone, and it is probable that the Samaritan alphabet is derived from the ancient Hebrew.

"It is interesting" (writes Dean Walsh) "to look upon these old Moabite forms, and to reflect that it was in characters such as these men wrote their thoughts in the days of Ahab and Elijah; that in looking upon the Moabite stone we are looking at the very words which their contemporaries saw with their own eyes, and read for their companions! Nay, more, that inasmuch as the evidence goes to prove that the same system of writing prevailed all over Western Asia, we are actually gazing at the characters in which David wrote his Psalms, Solomon his Proverbs, and Samuel his histories; that we have before us the very forms, and letters, and language in which the grandest parts of the Old

Testament were originally penned." "Further" (says Professor Rawlinson) "it may be over-bold to go; but a suspicion forces itself upon us, that in the characters of which the photographic traces are before us to-day we see the forms of the letters in which, more than three thousand years ago, the Pentateuch itself was penned. And if this be so, there is but one step more, and we are left at the very threshold of heaven; we may be gazing upon the very characters and letters which were inscribed upon the tables of stone, amid the thunders of Mount Sinai, by the very fingers of God Himself! With such a thought—so solemn and so overwhelming, passing up from possibility to probability in our minds—we gaze in wonder at the ancient stone of Moab."

Historical Accuracy.

Respecting the historical harmony of the stone and Bible, Professor Davidson says: "It is something to find here a corroboration of a story which was so tragic and hateful that we might fancy only national dislike could have invented it against any one. It is something to have called up before our eyes in something like the form of flesh and blood this shadowy prince, and to find him, though wild and hasty, of such capacity both in war and peace; and to be taught once more what energies lay in the breasts and arms of early races, and how small

an arena is needed for all that is high and tragic in human life to transact itself upon. If we could separate from one another the particles of water that make up a river, and seem to flow so softly, how each separate particle would be found to rush and jostle and rage against the others; and it is only when we disengage the living particles of the stream of human existence, that seems to move on so sluggishly and smoothly, that we detect the fiery energy and the wild vitality with which each particle is animated."

Geography.

Respecting the geography of the stone and the Bible, Professor Weir says :—" On the geography of Moab we have a great deal of information, particularly as to the disputed territory lying north of the Arnon. Lists of the principal cities are given in Numbers and Joshua; and in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah against Moab many names of places are mentioned. Now no fewer than twelve of the names which we meet with in those portions of the historical and prophetical Scriptures appear also on the monument. In that old record we read of Dibon, Medeba, Baal-meon, Kerioth, Kiriathaim, Jahaz, Beth-bamoth, Beth-diblathaim, Bezer, Horonaim, names with which we have been long familiar. Among these Dibon appears, as well from the stone as from Scripture, to have ranked

high both politically and as a chief sanctuary of Chemosh, the god of Moab. Kerioth, also, we conclude from Amos, was a place of great importance; and on the stone it is mentioned as the sanctuary to which Mesha repaired for the purpose of presenting before Chemosh the trophies of victory. From Numbers and Isaiah we learn that Jahaz was a border city, the occupation of which was of course of the first consequence, especially in the time of war; and quite in harmony with this are the facts recorded upon the stone, that it was rebuilt and garrisoned by a king of Israel, doubtless for the protection of his frontier, and that its capture was one of Mesha's principal exploits. I may add that the three cities of Baal-meon, Kiriathaim, and Beth-diblathaim appear, both from the stone and from Scripture, to have been situated in the same vicinity. Besides the foregoing well-known names, other three words appear in the inscription, regarding which it is yet doubtful whether they are names of places or not. Two of these have been identified, with more or less of probability, with the scriptural Kir-Moab and Nebo. Regarding the third, Karchah, or Korchah, if the name of a city, the Bible is profoundly silent. From what has been said the great importance of the stone in every point of view to the archæologist, the linguist, the historian, the divine, is apparent."

"How obviously" (remarks Professor Moses Stuart) "everything of this kind serves to give con-

firmation to the authority and credibility of the sacred record. Do sceptics undertake to scoff at the Bible, and aver that it is the work of impostors who lived in later ages? Besides asking them what object impostors could have had in forging a book of such high and lofty principles, we may ask—and ask with an assurance that need not fear the danger of being put to the blush—whether impostors of later years could possibly have so managed as to preserve all the localities in the complete order which the Scriptures present? Rare impostors, indeed, they must have been; men possessed of more knowledge of antiquity than we can well imagine could ever be possessed by such as would condescend to an imposition of such a character. In fact, the thing appears to be morally impossible, if one considers it in the light of antiquity, when so little knowledge of a geographical kind was in existence, and when mistakes respecting countries and places with which one was not personally familiar were almost, if not altogether, unavoidable. It is not so long ago since one of the first scientific writers on geology published to the world the astounding news that the Mississippi and Missouri belong to the tropics. Respectable writers in Germany have sometimes placed Cœlo-Syria on the east of the Antilibanus range; or even seemed to transfer the city of Damascus over the mountains and place it between the two Lebanon ridges in the valley."

"How is it" (asks Dean Walsh) "that the sacred writers make no such mistakes? How is it that they mention places with the utmost familiarity? How is it that, after the lapse of thirty centuries, travellers, ruins, monuments, inscriptions proclaim to the world that those cities were *where* and *what* these writers said they were, and thus bear testimony to their credibility and truth?"

Conclusion.

"This monument has shed new light" (says Dean Walsh) "upon the history of the past. It has opened to us new views of language and philology. It has solved some of the most difficult problems and settled some of the most vexed controversies of the learned. But beside and beyond all this, it has helped us to understand our Bibles better; it has urged us, I trust, to read them with more reverence and attention, and to accept them with a more thorough and entire reliance."

In this restless age of doubt and darkness; when unstable minds are carried to and fro with every blast of vain doctrine; when the black battalions of infidelity are mustering to assault the stronghold of Faith, if perchance its foundations may be overthrown; at this opportune moment the patriarchal stone of the land of Moab rises from the tomb of antiquity, and, hoary with the age of 3,000 years, like a teacher of righteousness it cheers the faithful and gives strength to the wavering.

Pointing to the past it vindicates the truth of the Oracles of God, and thus speaks to the sons of men :—"Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers : for we are but of yesterday and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow."

Pointing to the future, this venerable prophet throws the light of hope on our path by dispelling our fears and increasing our faith.

It reminds us that while "men's little systems have their day, they have their day and cease to be," "the word of the Lord endureth for ever," so that "they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever."

THE END.

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